

# RESEARCH ROUNDUP

Breed specific legislation can apply to a variety of dogs, including purebred and mixed-breed dogs. BSL enforcement is based primarily on visual identification, leaving officials, families, and communities confused about how and when to enforce the laws.

The following studies explain why visual breed identification is highly inaccurate - even when done by animal experts. These studies results challenge the reliability of visual breed identification and its role in public and private policies.

## COMPARISON OF ADOPTION AGENCY BREED IDENTIFICATION AND DNA BREED IDENTIFICATION OF DOGS

Research led by Dr. Voith in 2009 compared adoption agencies' visual breed identifications of 20 mixed-breed dogs against DNA identification. There were discrepancies between the visual identification and DNA results 85.7% of the time.

## COMPARISON OF VISUAL AND DNA BREED IDENTIFICATION OF DOGS AND INTER-OBSERVER RELIABILITY

Of the 923 people involved in dog related professions and activities who participated in this 2013 study, less than half correctly visually identified the predominant breed detected by DNA analysis for 14 of the 20 dogs.

The participants inter-observer agreement was also low, for only half of them agreed on a predominant breed for 7 of the 20 dogs could over half the participants agree on a predominant breed. DNA analysis was inconsistent with the visual identification for 3 of those 7 dogs.

## RETHINKING DOG BREED IDENTIFICATION IN VETERINARY PRACTICE

This policy paper by Simpson et al. argues that because modern dogs are primarily bred for looks vs behavior or tasks, veterinarians should refrain from making determinations about a dog's behavior based on visual identification.

## IS THAT DOG A PIT BULL? A CROSS-COUNTRY COMPARISON OF PERCEPTIONS OF SHELTER WORKERS REGARDING BREED IDENTIFICATION.

This 2014 study shows how shelter staff perceptions of a "pit bull" dogs vary in the U.S. vs. the U.K.

The National Canine Research Council explains:

"PARTICIPANTS WERE GIVEN A LIST OF 10 BREED NAMES THAT THE AUTHORS CONSIDERED TO BE "BULL BREEDS." U.S. PARTICIPANTS WERE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE LIKELY TO CLASSIFY 6 OF THE 10 BREEDS (AMERICAN BULLDOG, AMERICAN STAFFORDSHIRE TERRIER, ENGLISH BULL TERRIER, MINIATURE BULL TERRIER, PRESA CANARIO, AND STAFFORDSHIRE BULL TERRIER) AS "PIT BULLS" THAN WERE THEIR U.K. COUNTERPARTS."

## INCONSISTENT IDENTIFICATION OF PIT BULL-TYPE DOGS BY SHELTER STAFF

This 2015 study compared a sample of shelter staff's visual breed identifications of "pit bull-type dogs" to DNA analysis. The study also compared the breed determinations of those shelter workers.

More than 1/3 of the dogs without any "pit bull-type dog" DNA (as defined by the study) were labeled as a "pit bull-type dog" by at least one of the participants.

*For an in-depth overview of these studies, visit the National Canine Research Council.*