The Evolution of Adoption Programs:
Part One: Taking Breed out of the Equation
Dr. Julie Levy and Caitlin Quinn
Video Transcript
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[Beginning of Audio]

Facilitator: Okay, let's go ahead and get into our next two-part presentation for the afternoon. Again I would like to remind everybody to take care of their cell phones. We are recording. Please hold questions till the end.

I do also want to extend another round of thanks to Maddie's Fund for sponsoring the conference and a very special thanks to Animal Farm Foundation for sponsoring today's topics. There is a little bit of a typo in your program. This first session actually goes till 3:30, not 3:00, so 2:00 to 3:30.

And then they'll be a half hour break and we'll start back with the final session of the day. Tonight we do have the welcome session sponsored by Animal Farm Foundation at 6:00 PM, and I think the location is the Boca Patio wherever that is. And I think some of you have some refreshment certificates in your nametags that you can use to get some drinks.

The other thing that I want to tell the Florida veterinarians in the audience specifically is I want to remind you that Monday night, that's tomorrow night, we are having the three-hour pharmacy session that's required for renewing your license every two years is now three hours, not one and a half hours, and it'll be Monday night here and it is presented by Mr. Ed Bayo.

He's a lawyer that specializes in representation of professional licensees. And I've been to his three-hour session and it's very entertaining. It's worth your while. I think you would really enjoy getting that required CE from Mr. Bayo compared to – as compared to other options. It's also very eye opening.

So our first speaker is Dr. Julie Levy who is Director of Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program at the University of Florida and she is our Maddie's Professor of Shelter Medicine. She is boarded in internal medicine and earned her PhD in infectious diseases.

And she – her career has focused on studying feline infectious diseases as well as nonsurgical sterilization means or immune contraceptive vaccines. Her research has also included topics such as community CAP programs which most of us know her best for reduced adoption fees and most recently visual breed identification of shelter dogs. So, please help me welcome Dr. Julie Levy.

Dr. Julie Levy: Thank you. And for those of you coming to the Monday night session feel free to pick up a dinner and bring it to the session, because there won't be – they'll be some drinks at the CE session, but not at dinner, but make yourself comfortable with whatever you'd like to bring.

It is a lot of fun for me to present the topics that are in the next session. We've been doing some research at the University of Florida on visual breed identification and we've gone into shelters and asked staff to identify breeds that are in their shelter and compare them to each other and the most amazing thing is how inconsistent shelter staff would name breeds.

And that suddenly starts us being very concerned about what it means when we pick a breed based on the appearance of a dog. Have any of you been involved in any of the research like our online survey for research for breed identification? Oh great. So, this I see one person has, so I think you'll enjoy seeing these results.

You should, by now, have the response clickers. We're asking everybody to share a response clicker with their neighbor, so about one clicker per two persons. Trish is over here if you need one, just raise your hand and feel free to confer with your neighbor when selecting a choice, so you can have a little bit of dialogue in interaction with us.

So, the title of my talk is: *What Kind of Dog is That?* So if you look at a dog like this one, think about what you might call this breed of dog and keep that in the back of your mind. And we are as a society very focused on breeds and trying to put a breed on every single dog.

If you think about where dogs came from, they were domesticated 10,000 years ago, that's the natural dog, and breeds were developed a few hundred years ago. So, it is not the case that every dog has a heritage of

having a pure bred dog in its background. Lots of dogs are just the natural dog and never had an ancestor that could be correlated with the breed.

So, here's your first clicker question and all you have to do is look at the, your clicker and match up the name, the number – the letter that matches. So, when matching dogs with potential adopters my shelter rarely considers the suspected breed, usually takes breed into consideration or places a high importance on breed. So, just pick one. You can actually vote many times and your last answer will be recorded. And you have 19 more seconds to record your answer.

All right, so here's your poll results. So, by far the most common is usually takes the breed into consideration when matching dogs with potential adopters. So, think about this and think about whether you would answer this the same after we share some recent data that we've collected with you.

But definitely that would be my experience too is shelters often look at a dog, pick a breed, and make assumptions about that dog, usually its behavior, but sometimes it's about its size or it's grooming necessities and other things that are more predictable than the behavior of the dog.

So we do believe that 53 percent of dogs in the US are either mixed breed dogs or just natural dogs that don't ascend from a pure bred, so over half of dogs are mixed breed. And we use breed ambiguously in our daily life either as veterinarians or as shelter personnel.

So very often if there is a lost and found poster, breed will be identified. And you can imagine the hazard of this if I look at a brown dog and call it a yellow lab mix and the owner looks at that brown dog and calls it a German shepherd mix, if we're relying on that to reunite the finder and the person who lost the pet, we're not going to get a match.

So some lost and found software actually prevents you from using breed and instead requires very consistently identifiable information such as the size of the dog or the sex of the dog and maybe the primary color of the dog in an effort to do a better job matching.

A lot of our veterinary software and shelter software actually require a breed to be listed even if you don't want one. Sometimes you can put in custom codes like mixed so that you're not forced to, but not always, sometimes you do have to declare a breed even if you're uncomfortable doing that.

Similarly, for adoption matching online programs like Pet Finder, you must put in a breed and that's because they have millions of pets that are

in that database and they need some kind of sorting mechanism and so they picked breed as a way to just narrow down the search, so that this poor person looking to adopt a dog doesn't have to look at millions to find the dog that they want.

And a lot of times when people are thinking about the kind of dog they want they might be remembering a childhood pet or an animal that meant a lot to them and they're imagining that their next pet would have the qualities of that pet that they remember fondly. But very often, just picking based on breed or appearance is not going to meet that need.

It's usually the personality of the animal that they wanted. Rabies certificates have a slot for breed. Although we get to write whatever we want in those, so you can write mix or makeup a breed and nobody's going to care. Insurance policies for homeownership especially count, so often will require breed and some insurance companies will not insure your home or give you rental insurance with certain breeds.

Housing application, a huge problem. In areas where there may be breed bans at the municipal level, but it may be very hard to find housing, especially rental housing for certain breeds of dogs. And then, of course, I think the biggest reason that we identify breeds is because pet owners just really want to know.

It's almost like your own heritage. If you came from immigrant families. People are doing a lot of genealogy, finding out what their family history was. And so we naturally would like to know more about our own pets as well and can be just like a horoscope almost.

So here's your next poll question. I want you to assess your level of confidence in being able to identify a breed correctly in a mixed breed dog. And this means just be able to pick at least one of the breeds of that, you know, there might be four breeds in a mix, but if you can correctly identify one. So hardly ever, at least 25 percent of the time, at least half of the time, at least 75 percent of the time, or almost always.

Okay, this is a somewhat cautious group and you probably have already sort of forecast where this is going, so you've built in some caution with your prediction. But, so the bulk of material – the bulk of the folks think that they can identify dogs correctly either a quarter percent of the time or 50 percent of the time, and some very confident people are at the tail end being able to correctly identify dogs most of the time.

And you can actually take a blood sample or a cheek swab now and send it off to DNA testing companies and they will return a result like this which is a breed ancestry certification complete with pedigree based on the DNA

analysis. And this is probably stretching it a bit to display their results in this format which really does imply that it's a pedigree. It is not.

But these DNA testing services, at least the one that we have worked with which is the Mars Wisdom Panel, seem to be fairly reliable. We're not entirely sure what the sensitivity and specificity in test performance is, but when we know the breeds that are involved in mixed breeds, usually they correlate with these DNA certificates.

So you wouldn't want to hang your hat on it 100 percent, but it is a way to find out something about the makeup of a mixed breed dog. And so here's a picture. You can go on the Mars website and pet owners who have had their DNA tested can actually post a picture and tell a little story about the dog and then you see the DNA results.

So if you look at this dog, think about what breed in your shelter or your practice you would name this dog just based on purely on is physical appearances. So, a little yellow dog with floppy ears, short coat. Looks friendly. So here's Cindy Lou's ancestry: American foxhound, Beagle, Bloodhound, Cocker Spaniel, Great Dane and some miscellaneous mix.

Were any of these breeds on your radar? Someone said yes. But what – just shout out some of the breeds you thought most common, most likely. Lab, yellow lab and then go from there. Not in there. But here's the owners responses. "We adopted her from the local Humane Society. Slightly surprised with the results, but I can totally see all those breeds in her."

This is the horoscope part of it. You know you read that horoscope, it's incredibly vague and could apply to anybody, but suddenly you see how it has relevance in your life. Here's another one. Think about what breeds you would be looking in this little dog with the pointy nose, short coat, floppy ears, and speckled tan pattern. Did Chihuahua and Leonberger hit your list?

Yeah. Whoever's saying yes is probably lying. So her owners say "We always thought our puppy Suzy was an Australian cattle dog healer mix. The mystery was solved when we found out that she's a cross with a Chihuahua and a Leonberger using the Wisdom panel." So again a lot of fun with these breed identifications, but they really don't tell us too much about what the dog looks like and certainly not what it would be behaving like.

So here's your next poll question. What is the best reason to know the actual breeds in a mixed breed dog? Is it because that helps you know if they're trainable, if they're going to be dog aggressive or human

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aggressive, might predict future breed specific health concerns, their adult size if it's a puppy, or that really none of these are reliable?

Okay. So you are very much like veterinary students. They pick up visual – it's like psychics – they can pick up visual clues when they're sitting at the same table with someone and give the answer that that person is needing to hear. So you already know where I'm coming from, but absolutely right.

I'm really glad to see that you have not fallen into the trap that a dog that looks like a border collie is going to be necessarily good at agility or a fly ball or that a pit bull is going to be naturally aggressive and needs some special concerns. So even within a breed that is bred for certain behavioral traits, there is huge wide variation among the individuals in that breed.

And then when you start adding mixes and mix up that recipe, you have no way of knowing which behavioral traits are going to be expressed in the dog, so it's really not possible to look at a dog and predict its behavior traits. So we wanted to really study whether experts could visually identify dog breeds. This – to do this study there were 100 shelter dogs.

We went into four different Florida shelters and we collected blood from those dogs, sent them out for DNA analysis. We photographed and weighed and measured the dogs and developed that breed signature so we knew what breeds were in the dogs. If they had at least 25 percent of a pure breed we included the dogs and that's how we ended up with 100.

And then we developed a survey – well this is our picture of us in the shelters, taking pictures of the dogs and weighing and measuring them and getting their DNA signatures. So we just asked an internet – we broadly appealed to the internet to attract people who thought they were dog experts. So this was veterinarians, techs, assistants, trainers and behaviorists, breeders, rescuers, and others like groomers.

Anybody who thought they were a dog expert could take this survey online. Of the 100 dogs, each time someone took a survey they were presented with 20 randomly selected dogs, because that seemed to be in our pilot testing about as many as people could handle it. It actually was time consuming and hard to do this study – survey. People got really stressed out in trying to pick the breeds.

I mean we just asked them to pick the most likely breed. There was a drop-down menu of 181 breeds that they could pick from and they could also pick no particular breed if they thought there – they couldn't pick a pure bred. And we were very lenient. We scored them as correct if they

picked any breed in that dog. So if that dog had 25 percent of 4 different breeds, they could just pick 1 and we said they were right.

So we really optimized correctness here. And this is what it looked like. They got a picture of the face and a whole body picture, as well as a description of the *[inaudible],* so in this case it's a 2-year old dog, 45 pounds, 18 inches tall and a neutered male. And then they would click on the drop-down menu to pick a breed.

So we had a huge survey, almost 6,000 results which gives it incredible statistical power. What was amazing is they also answered that question about what percentage of the time you think you'd be right, and 68 percent predicted they would be right at least half of the time, and 3 percent were. Pretty appalling.

When we looked at the individual dogs there was an average of 53 different breeds assigned to each picture. Six percent of the dogs didn't have a single correct answer. And no predominant breed was selected only nine percent of the time on average. So again people are just – we're just trained. It's cultural for us to pick a breed. And this is the distribution of responder accuracy.

See that tallest – it's a nice bell-shaped curve, but it's kind of shifted to the lower end of the range. And the biggest group was being between 20 and 20, 30 percent accurate, so pretty low. And then we also wanted to know well is there certain professional groups that are more likely to be accurate, like, would the dog trainers be more accurate than the veterinarians? Not so much. Pretty much everybody was pretty bad.

So, that first column is the veterinarians. This isn't a big surprise. I mean of you veterinarians, how many of you had intensive formal breed identification training in veterinary school? Yeah, one person. And yet we're expected to go into court and testify whether a dog is a pit bull or not because we're experts and similarly experts are shelter staff. They're considered to render opinions based on physical appearance whether animals are a certain breed or not.

So this old dog had the highest score. So, not surprisingly, her DNA said she was 100 percent beagle. So if you put beagle and any, if you thought there was any beagle in this dog at all, you were correct. And so the survey results beagle was the highest, followed by Bassett, no predominant breed, foxhound and then some other breed.

There were a total of 11 different breeds, but for 6,000 respondents that's a pretty tight list. So she did very well. 98 percent of the respondents got her right or him right. This was our little dog that had the very worst

identification. So think in your mind what you would call this dog if you had to pick a breed to put on her cage card or his cage card. So here's the DNA results.

Were any of these breeds on your list? Here's the results from the survey. Yep, everyone said Brittany. A big – a lot of people though said "No, I can't tell." No predominant breed. Accuracy – one-half of one percent got any of her breeds right and 84 different breeds were picked.

So the outcome study is we said despite having a high confidence level in identification of the breeds of dogs of unknown heritage self-described dog experts correctly identify dogs only one out of every four dogs. And these are the people that are being asked to fill out breed on the paperwork that we have to complete.

So this indicates that regardless of the profession, visual identification of the breeds and dogs is poor. So let's move on to pit bulls which is where this really starts to matter because breed identification in some jurisdictions and in some shelters, can be a life or death issue. So in your shelter do you, if you adopt out dogs, what – how do you handle pit bulls?

Do you not adopt them out at all? Do you adopt them out but have some special requirements either additional assessments of the dogs, like, extra behavioral evaluations or additional assessments of the people, like, do they have to have a home check that you don't normally have for anybody else or a background check or they're just like any other dog; you just adopt them out without anything special?

And I realize some of you may be sitting next to somebody with a completely different policy in your shelter. The bully can win. Oh yeah, times are changing. So, a few shelters still are not adopting the dogs out at all. That may be a jurisdictional requirement rather than a shelter requirement.

Of the shelters that don't adopt pit bulls out at all, how many of those are there? Just a couple probably. Raise your hand. I see one. Is it because of breed specific legislation in your community? How many of it is a shelter policy? One. One okay. And then there are a third of the responders said yes, they adopt them out, but they've got additional restrictions.

So either the dogs get extra assessments or the people get extra assessment. And this is a place where a lot is changing fast. So there was, you know, ten years ago a lot of popularity of these ambassadors programs where you pick your very best pit bulls and you display them and call them very best, and then the people get a background check and a home

visit to make sure they're good enough to own a pit bull because they – everybody has to be responsible with these dogs.

And at the same time we're trying to educate the community to say judge every animal as an individual and pit bulls should not be discriminated against. They're like other dogs. So we have to be very careful about what we're signaling through our shelter policy.

If we have a set of dogs that have different rules for them, we are also telling the public that there is something special about these dogs or the people that like these dogs, and there's not a lot of evidence for that to be the case. But over half of the shelters are just adopting them out with – like everybody else.

That's the case in our shelter in Alachua County, Florida. Yes they call them pit bulls, but they don't have any other regulations. Our adoption screening process is pretty slack; we're really pushing animals out to homes and we just don't see a problem with that. Well, our shelter staff can pick up on dangerous dogs regardless of the breed.

So pit bull, just so you know even though we call it a breed and this is a talk about breeds, it's not a breed. And I think that's a source of amazing confusion. There is no standard definition of what a pit bull is and that becomes quite a big problem when you have breed specific legislation or housing rules. There's no definition of a pit bull, but it says you can't have one. It becomes very confusing.

But traditionally the breeds associated with being called a pit bull are the American pit bull terrier. That's the pure bred, American pit bull terrier. There's a pedigree and a breed registry. That is not the equivalent of a pit bull. So if you're putting breeds on your cage cards and you want to call something a pit bull, you should call it a pit bull and not an American pit bull terrier because that's a pure bred dog.

American Staffordshire terrier, Staffordshire bull terrier, mixes of these breeds or dogs that look like them even if they don't have these breeds in them. So, short stocky, big headed, short haired dogs are called pit bulls frequently. So we were interested because the stakes are so high when shelters feel like they have to make this designation about can shelter staff identify pit bulls reliably.

So we did another study. We went into those four shelters and at each shelter we had four staff members. One of which was a veterinarian, so there was a total of 4 shelters, 16 staff members. We selected dogs, 30 dogs in each shelter and it was a variety of dogs. Puppies, adults, pure

bred looking things, pit bull looking things and everything in between, so they had a very diverse population to look at.

And we walked them through the shelter. We covered the cage cards. We walked them through as a group and without talking they had to just look at the dog from the outside of the cage and mark down what they thought was a predominant breed. And we did not have a breed list for them. They just wrote whatever they want.

These were all staff that had to identify breeds on a regular basis in their shelter. We looked at the agreement between the staff at that shelter and then also looked at the agreement between what the shelter staff said and the DNA results. And for us to call it a pit bull we made the definition that if it had at least 25 percent of AmStaff or Staffordshire bull terrier that was our definition of a pit bull.

The DNA test does not have a test for American pit bull terrier or just generic pit bull *[inaudible]*. So this is some of the results. This shows a graph of all of the dogs that actually were pit bulls. So at the first shelter there were three dogs that were DNA tested as having pit bull heritage breeds. And if it's colored in dog face that means that that shelter observer identified that dog.

So what you can see – these are all the pit bulls – is that for one there was very poor agreement. You can't tell from this, but they didn't necessarily look at the same dog and call it a pit bull. They would identify different dogs. One in five pit bulls was missed by all the shelter staff, but each shelter member missed half the pit bulls.

You can see this graph is about half white, that's because that shelter staff member missed it, but if you added them altogether still one in five were missed by everybody. And one in three dogs that was labeled as a pit bull by a staff member actually was not, so really poor agreement here by shelter staff in identifying pit bulls.

So I'm bringing you back to that first question now about your confidence level in identifying the breed in a mixed breed dog. And I had already shaken your confidence before I even showed you data, so this might not shift as much as it does in some other audiences. I did make it worse for you. Good.

And so the lesson here is I hope you're convinced that we can't look at a dog and know its genetic heritage. So we need to work as an industry to start stripping away that from being a primary way that we describe dogs, and it's going to be hard because people want to know. They're used to

looking at that. And the first question that a friend will ask you if you say "Hey, I got a new dog," what kind is it?

And we're just trained to respond that way, so we need better ways to describe dogs. What I have seen in some shelters is they say looks like, so I think that's very fair. You can say looks like a Lab. We're not claiming it's a lab and we're not claiming its going to act like your idea of what a lab acts like.

So takeaways from this session before I turn it over to Caitlin are the visual breed identification in mixed breed dogs is unreliable. Pit bull identification is often wrong, guessing the breeds in shelter dogs is likely to misinform most of the time, and that the DNA profiles are fun to satisfy your curiosity, but cannot be used to predict breed associated behavior or even health traits that may emerge in those dogs, and that shelters can enhance adoption programs by focusing on more reliable descriptions than breeds.

But I didn't want to deny you the opportunity to find out what this cute little dog is, so think back to what you thought she was. She had these beautiful big ears. This is what she looked like in action. She was a pit bull by our definition, but most of us would not have called her a pit bull or identified any of these other breeds. I was going for Border collie. How many of you were going for Border collie? What else were you going for? Corgi. The big ears, okay.

So I'd like to thank Maddie's Fund, not only for sponsoring our attendance here at this meeting, but also for sponsoring our entire program makes it possible to do this kind of research, so the student project and there's a poster over on the poster section that you can look at to see more detail about the results of this paper and it's been submitted for publication, so hopefully you can read all the details soon. And with that I'd like to bring Caitlin up and she'll take it from here. Thank you.

Facilitator: I'd like to introduce Caitlin Quinn from Animal Farm Foundation. She is the foundation's manager and she acts also as the grant manager as well as the program manager. She's the one you would see about acquiring funding to build play yards.

Caitlin Quinn: We'll talk about that.

Facilitator: Okay. She also directs marketing and communications and managers their educational content. Her main focus is working to end discriminatory adoption policies and public policies to increase positive outcomes in shelters in their communities. Thank you. Caitlin.

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Caitlin Quinn: Is there a clicker for this? Okay perfect. We're ready to roll I think if everything goes smoothly. Okay. So, a lot of what's going to be in this presentation is going to sound very familiar based on what Dr. Levy just told you, but we're going to dive in a little bit deeper into some of those concepts.

And while this is all sort of framed around pit bulls, I think it's really important to understand that this is good information and important information for all the dogs in our shelter. Animal Farm Foundation is an organization whose current mission is very specific to pit bull dogs.

But, I'll talk a little bit later about how some of the changes that we've had to make to our own program in order to really drive home that point that all dogs are individuals, that we can't continue to treat pit bulls as if they are more special or different than other dogs and still accomplish the main goal of getting everyone to treat dogs as if they're individuals.

So, the situation now in shelters across the country, I think is that shelters and rescues label dogs by breed assuming that that's going to give them information about who the dogs are. Adopters select and shelters match make dogs and people base that on breed specific guesses.

Adopters often minimize their own responsibility to train their dogs when we do that – when we sort of buy into this game because we're seen as the experts in the community, and so us putting a breed label on dogs gets taken very, very seriously by the public. It comes off as a guarantee in a lot of situations.

And why we do this in sheltering is something that, I think, we're all still working through a little bit. But typically it's because we believe that we can visually identify dogs by breed, even mixed breeds. We believe that behavior is predictable by breed and historical dog type characteristics are, we think are relevant to pets – pet dog selection.

And I think you guys already know where we're going with this, but the answer to all of these is, is that that's not true, but we'll get into sort of the nitty-gritty a little bit. So to give you some background for those of you that don't know Animal Farm Foundation started in the mid-80s and we actually started as a horse rescue initially.

And we're privately funded so our founder ended up adopting a dog from the local shelter who turned out to be a pit bull. And what she realized especially at that time was that she was facing quite a lot of discrimination as the owner of a dog that was labeled pit bull and people were making broad-based assumptions about her dog based on the fact that it was called a pit bull.

So she immediately switched gears because she's that kind of lady who really likes to help out. She – our mission at the time that stayed this way for a very long time was to restore the image of the American pit bull terrier and protect him from discrimination and cruelty.

And what I wanted to point out about that, and we discussed this a little bit just now, is that at the time we assumed just like everyone else that American pit bull terrier – if we called the dog a pit bull it meant that it must be some part of this breed American pit bull terrier. We're using that as sort of the pit bull became the short, you know, the nickname for American pit bull terrier.

But what we realized over time, pretty quickly and it took us a while to, I think, evolve as an industry to go along with this idea, is that dogs of all kinds are being called this label. So pit bull became shorthand for all these dogs in here and as Dr. Levy said "A lot of dogs who looked like any of these dogs because, you know, harnessed with that label."

And we'll talk a little bit more as, you know, throughout this presentation and definitely later on in terms of marketing about, you know, what are the solutions, in terms of, you know, all this information that we're giving you. So, what Animal Farm decided to do in 2011 was we changed our mission to secure equal treatment and opportunity for pit bull dogs and we're always really careful to put dogs after pit bull just too really get at that point that dogs are dogs are dogs are dogs.

And we'll talk a little bit more about that. But, we also put pit bull in quotes which became a little bit of a controversial funny thing, and I will say upfront right now I don't expect everybody to run around going like this all the time, because I don't think that that will be helpful at all. But we will talk about why it is that we did that.

And I really love this picture because this isn't just a quick sample of some of the dogs that have been in our shelter in the last six months or so, and one of those dogs came to us with papers, a paper as American pit bull terrier. If you guys want to just shout out which dog do you think it is? Anybody?

The one in the purple tube is not – it's not either one of the *[inaudible]* dogs, I will tell you that much. And those are typically the ones that people pick first because we don't – I don't even think we know that we're doing that sometimes. We're just sort of conditioned to think that if the dog has papers it must be some sort of pure breed dog.

It's actually the very first dog, that little black puppy who – and that and this game is a little bit like one of these things is not like the other, right. So that puppy came to us with papers and it's hard to tell on this photo, I think, but she was mostly black. She had a little bit of *[inaudible]* on her chest and she had some tan markings right above her eyes.

And so in a lot of shelters, a lot of the shelters that we've talked to and shown this picture to, their assumption was that she was either a Rottweiler or a coon hound or some dog that we associate typically with being black and tan. And it just wasn't true. This is the only dog in that past, I think, four or five years that we got that came with papers. So, I just think that that's interesting.

Dr. Levy referred to how this sort of complicates the issue of breed specific legislation. I pulled a couple of ordinances from across the country in places that have breed specific legislation and one of the things we did when we were deciding to sort of overall our mission statement was to look at the legal definitions of pit bull to see if that would give us any indication of is there any agreement, you know.

We already had our guesses about that, but we decided to look at the law and see what that told us. So the first one that I want you to look at is Omaha, Nebraska. And they say "Pit bull should be defined as any dog that is American pit bull terrier, American Staffordshire terrier, Staffordshire bull terrier, Dogo Argentino, Presa Canario, Cane Corso, American bull dog or any dog displaying the majority of physical traits of any one or more of those breeds."

So, there's a couple things of interest I think in that definition. It's really hard to read off in a list like that. It's also they sort of cherry pick some of those pure breeds of dogs that I showed you in one of our first slides. It's not all of them. It's some of them and that seems like a subjective choice.

And the other thing that's interesting is that they say "Or any dog displaying the majority of physical traits." But they're – that's still an unquantifiable thing, right? We don't know what the majority of one of those things looks like. And so this definition really is as clear as mud I think. It really doesn't get at anything other than this definition is always going to be a subjective definition.

So, the next one, that I want you to look at is Maquoketa, Iowa which thankfully actually has repealed their discriminatory legislation. But what they said was "Pit bull terrier dogs or mixed pit bull terrier dogs or any dog which has the appearance and characteristic of being a pit bull terrier." So saying a pit bull terrier is exactly the same as saying pit bull. That's not a pure breed.

That's just, you know, referring to a group of dogs as if they were now because we added terrier into the mix as if they were all a member of the terrier group which is an actual group of dog. So now we've sort of taken an inaccurate label and taken it a step further and decided that all of the dogs that we're calling this must also be a member of the terrier group.

So that is why I have that one up there because I think its interest – it's an interesting choice to add terrier in there 'because I think it just complicates it further. The last definition that I will talk about at this moment is from Melville, New Jersey and what they say is "An American pit bull terrier, an American Staffordshire terrier, pull terrier or Saint Francis terrier or any mixed breed with at least 50 percent of any combination of *[inaudible]* said named breeds."

So, there's two huge problems here. How many of you by a show of hands get Saint Francis terriers into your shelter on a regular basis? Thank you for not raising your hand because that does not exist. That is – it's not a breed of dog, but it's listed here as if it was a pure breed of dog. So that's first, very disconcerting about the law that that made its way into the law there.

The way that that came up was in San Francisco, California at one point, they had decided to we're going to rebrand pit bulls and they decided to call them Saint Francis terriers. It didn't work, you know, it didn't catch on. It didn't change anybody's minds about who the dogs were. But it did make its way into the law in New Jersey, so I think that's interesting.

And the bigger issue here, and we're going to sort of dive into this specific segment, is that they're saying any mixed breed with at least 50 percent of one of those breeds. How exactly do we look at a dog in front of us and know what 50 percent of a breed of is in it? How do we know what 27 percent looks like? How do we know what 32 percent looks like?

You see where I'm going with this, right? But that's a very – that's a tall order and it's something that's completely unattainable for us as humans looking at dogs. So this didn't help us at all. The second thing that we did was we, we looked within our industry. So within animal welfare were we agreeing in any sort of standardized way about what to call a pit bull dog?

And the answer is that we don't and we still don't. We still sort of struggle with this. So these dogs that are on here I actually pulled off of Pet Finder and the one at the bottom is my most favorite. I don't know if you can see in the back, but he's like, just a hairy little guy, but he was labeled not even pit bull mix, he was just labeled a pit bull on Pet Finder.

So obviously these dogs, I think subjectively some of us would say that we think they share similar physical traits, but they don't; they certainly don't look very much alike and I think that's important, because we see this every day in our shelters. This is a familiar scenario to us. So what we – what we really concluded is that the use of the label pit bull has been used very arbitrarily and it really depends on who is using the label.

So we came up with this definition which will probably make you laugh because I'll probably run out of breath saying this but pit bull is not a breed or breed mix, but an ever-expanding group that includes whatever an animal control officer, a shelter worker, a dog trainer, politician, dog owner, police officer or a newspaper says it is.

And that's really just to get at this idea that at this point we have to sort of as an industry at least accept that we're using this term as a completely subjective meaningless label and not much more. And we're going to dive into the, some of the science behind this based on our relationship with the quote from the next gentleman.

Chris Irizarry is a doctor at Western University and he's our sort of expert geneticist that we're constantly running to, to ask a lot of questions about genetics. When we started having this conversation we really wanted to get into the genetic science behind why this is true especially about the visual breed ID.

And I like this quote from him because we tend as an industry and socially, you know, just as humans we tend to refer to especially pit bulls as if they are a coherent breed of dog. We tend to lump them into one category and then speak about them as if they are a coherent group as if they are a breed. And he said it's his professional opinion that this group of dogs must be the most genetically diverse dog breed on the planet.

I'm not sure what a pit bull characteristic is because the term pit bull does not refer to any specific breed of dog. And the next couple of slides that you'll see are actually from an infographic that we developed to sort of take this more complicated science and distill it down to, you know, some infographic pictures to really help everyone in shelters get a hold of this information.

So not just the veterinarians, but also, you know, the shelter workers, the kennel workers, the adoption counselors so that this was information that was accessible to everyone. So this is where we're going to go through this very quickly.

As Dr. Levy said, the first question that we have sort of conditioned ourselves to ask whenever we see a dog, as human, is to say "What kind of

dog is that?" And part of it is just our curiosity and that's always going to exist and that's absolutely fine. The part that we have to catch ourselves with as experts is what we take from that answer.

If we're taking the answer to that question and deciding that it tells us a whole lot about who that dog is, that's where we have to catch ourselves a little bit and really evaluate if that's true or not. These are where our infographic pictures start.

So, the first thing to understand is that the dog genome consists of approximately 20,000 genes and I know that a lot of you in this room probably already have this information, but I'm going to go over this just so that you have an understanding about how we talk to general shelter folks about this. Variation across 50 of those genes determines breed defining physical traits.

So, like our *[inaudible]* dogs that's variation across just one gene. And that means that less than one percent of a dog's genes determine physical appearance. So I'm also not going to go over this a whole ton because I – I'm sure you understand this at this point, but besides University of Florida's results there was also a study that was similarly conducted out of Western University that found that breed labels assigned to shelter dogs were wrong at least 75 percent of the time.

It was actually a little bit more than that typically. But this was also self-identified dog experts took this – took this survey and were the ones that were choosing the breed labels. So really from the bulk of the studies that have been done so far, the takeaways are that guesses even by experts are typically wrong and that we rarely agree with one another.

So even within this field, even among folks that are self-professed experts, we are – we typically don't even agree with one another. So, if you guys can just shout out and if some of you have, I'm sure, seen this study, so don't tell your neighbor if you have. But, if you just want to yell out if these dogs, these puppies came into your shelter, what would you re-label them as? Anybody? *[Inaudible].* I heard someone say hound mixes.

Sometimes when we go to other shelters typically they guess some sort of lab mix. And these are the parents, so this is – this is a pure bred of Basenji and a pure bred cocker spaniel, and those are the puppies. This information, these photos, the reason that they're not super high quality photos are taken from a 1965 study by Scott and Fuller.

And what they did was they bred a Basenji cocker spaniel and they got these puppies and then what they did was take it a step further and bred

Basenji cocker spaniel mixes with one another and you'll see in the next slide what they got, so this is now the second generation of puppies.

So what's really important and what I think is really helpful to remember about the puppies in this photo is that they still only have Basenji and cocker spaniel DNA, but now they are two generations removed and in terms of visually identifying them I think sort of most of us I don't think would guess at those breeds. Does anybody feel like they would have?

One of them sort of has a little bit of a, a cocker look to it. Does anybody think that they would have guessed these breeds? No, okay. Well good. And the reason that that's true – and this is the way that we've sort of gotten to explain this to shelters is that once you have a mixed breed dog, two pure bred dogs and you get the offspring of that dog, it's now missing 50 percent of each parent's DNA and it's a dog and that's all we can really say about it.

So it's important, I think, especially when we're doing all of this breed labeling and then assuming that there's behavioral traits that we're going to see because of the label that we've given the dog. I think it's incredibly important to remember that we can't accurately predict the behavior of mixed breed dogs by comparing them to pure breed dogs even if those pure breed dogs are their parents.

And this is one of my favorite sections of this infographic just because I think the visual really gets to the heart of this information. It's really just the tip of the iceberg what we see on the outside of a dog. And what's really important to remember is that the set of 50 genes, so that less than 1 percent that has to do with the way that the dog looks on the outside is different from the set of the thousands of genes responsible for brain development and function.

So the things that are typically predicting things like behavior or influencing things – I'm sorry – like behavior, so the takeaway really becomes looks don't equal behavior. And it think that I mean based on your survey results, I think that most people in this room really do understand that. Again mixed breed does not equal breed trait.

So this idea that giving a dog a label is going to give us a whole ton of information especially given the fact that a lot of our shelter dogs are mixed breed dogs, and in terms of again bringing sort of circling back to pit bull dogs, we tend to make some really serious judgments about that group of dogs based on what we think their breed is and putting them in this sort of pool of pit bull we make a lot of assumptions about them based on calling them that.

I kind of lied. This may be my favorite slide of this. Mostly because it's cute. But again you guys all understand this, that a pure bred gene pool is much, much different than a mixed breed gene pool. And once a dog is less than 100 percent of a single breed they have genetic variations that make them distinct from that breed.

And this is something that we typically have to explain, especially in shelters that unlike human identical twins, puppies that may come from the same litter and may look exactly alike, do not share identical DNA. And the bottom photo of this slide I think really speaks to what we all know intuitively and what we see in shelters, but that the dog in front of us is a product of many, many, many things, not just genetics, but training, breeding, socialization, diet, environment, health and management.

So really looking at the dog in front of us is the only answer in most cases to trying to predict, especially suitability for adoption. So inevitably, the question comes to well then should we be DNA testing the dogs in our shelters? And there's a couple answers to this question. The first is if you have an unlimited budget, then go to town and do whatever, do whatever you would like to do in term – in that regard.

But you're always going to have to remember that even if we know that the makeup of a dog based on the DNA test, it's still not going to give us all that information and what we really becomes susceptible to then is confirmation bias. So because now we have the results in front of us we start to pick out little things in a dog and associate it with a breed when most likely it's acting like a dog, right.

And again that's because, you know, DNA tests are not the answer because we're seeing such a small amount of the animal's DNA on the outside, that some of those results that we get even though it may make us skeptical, those are all things that are at work in the rest of the dog, the parts that we can't see. And really this is just, you know, in sum, really this idea that we can't judge a book by its cover.

I think as I said this is really important information for all the dogs in our shelters because as soon as we give a dog a breed label, because of the way that we tend to think about breeds and the way that our public thinks about breeds, there's a whole lot of baggage that comes along with that and especially when we're talking about dog's labeled pit bull.

So one of the biggest questions that I get when I talk to shelters about this information is "Okay, I hear what you're saying, but what exactly do you want me to do about this? So, what is the action item and how can I move forward when there's a whole lot of shelter software that asks me to place

a breed label on the dog and Pet Finder asked me to place a label on the dog?"

And the answer is sort of multilayered and it has to do with whatever your capabilities are. A bunch of these photos on the screen that you're seeing right now, this is how the animals appear from Orange County Animal Services.

And they, I think it was earlier just at the beginning of this year they released this information that sort of gets at the fact that our shelter pets are no exception to sort of the richly diverse heritage that we have in our country, and that they in efforts to afford every four-legged friend the greatest opportunity to find a forever home.

Orange County Animal Services will remove breed identification from kennel cards and on our website. So that's one answer is to sort of circumvent a lot of the systems and, of course, then you have to come up with your own system. So that's one answer.

But as Dr. Levy said another good sort of compromise if you're not quite ready to go there and not breed label at all is to insert this looks like option because then at least we are being accurate about what we're seeing. So, this is a – this is what the dog looks like. And then I'm going to go back for a second.

That poster on the – in the corner of the screen, I know that you guys can't read that. It says the shelter software system requires that we choose a predominant breed or breed mix for our dogs. Visual breed identification in dogs is unreliable, so for the most part for our dogs we are only guessing at predominant breed or breed mix.

And then it goes on to say we encourage you to choose your pet based on pet dog qualities or the – even the look of the pet, we know that a lot of people choose pets based on the way that they look. But it also gives shelter staff the opportunity to then have a conversation that is more like adoption counseling.

So it gives them the opportunity to say "This is – this is a very inaccurate practice, this practice of breed labeling dogs. So, why don't you tell me what you're looking for in a pet, so that I can help make the best match for you?" And that's really our strongest recommendation for how to – how to get around this and sort of start retraining the public because that becomes really important.

Once we have this information the next step of the game and what we're going to talk about later this afternoon is getting the public on the same

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page as us. So this is really where we're going with this especially in relation to pit bull dogs is that the label doesn't change who the dog is, and we're not naïve about the fact that you probably have to continue breed labeling the dogs on some level until the shelter software systems catch up with the rest of us and where all of the science is at.

But it is important to at least understand that it does change the meaning of the dog for some people based on the label that we give it. And this really – I have this in here because I do want people to understand that I'm not saying you have to go home and stop relabeling dogs right now. If you can do that, that would be amazing.

But if you cannot, I'm not naïve to the fact that, that is not something that is as easy as I'm making it sound. So what's most important is that we understand, again, that how a dog looks on the outside is not an indication of past or future behavior. And what does matter – so if the label doesn't matter, what does matter is that shelters are in the unique position and are seen increasingly more so as the experts in the community.
And that gives you a unique opportunity to match make based on what pet owners tell us they value in a dog and what we can provide them in terms of information about the dogs in our care. And this I put in here because Janice Bradley is someone that works for – she's the Director of Communications and Publications for the National Canine Research Counsel which is a subsidiary of Animal Farm Foundation.

She has this amazing booklet that's – it's free online. It's called *The Relevance of Breed in Selecting a Companion Dog*. And this is a quote that I just want to read you from what she says in there because I think it sort of takes all of this and sums it up into one quote.

Since the majority of dogs in the US are of mixed breed ancestry that cannot be reliably identified even by professionals, since even among pure bred breed is an unreliable predictor of behavior, and since most of the behaviors associated with specific breed are only tangentially related to desirable and undesirable qualities in pet dogs, the practice or relying on breed identification as a primary guide in either pet dog selection or dangerous dog designation, so that really gets to this idea that breed specific legislation is going to identify your dangerous dogs in the community should be abandoned.

Those practices are not getting to the – getting to the real issue in either case, pet dog selection or dangerous dog identification. So we're going to talk briefly about language because given this information I think it becomes incredibly important for us as experts in the community and as experts about animals to move forward and really reflect knowledge in our language and not just bad habit.

So typically we sort of fall into bad habits with our language. But it becomes really important especially when people are looking at you to make huge decisions about their life, that we are reflecting the most accurate information that we possess and not just our bad habits.

So, if we want the community to change, this is where sort of first we have to change and then we have to take the lead for the community. Animal welfare needs to change first. So you whether you are a veterinarian or someone that works in the shelter or a shelter manager, you're seen as an expert on animals in the community including pit bull dogs and other dogs.

The dogs are depending on us to be educated, receive, you know, always updated training, and then use that to get new information to the public. And especially in terms of pit bull dogs it's important to understand that all of this discrimination that sort of surrounds this group of dogs particularly is based on myths and we've all heard a lot of different myths associated with pit bull dogs. That they can't – they can't feel pain. That they can't, you know – and all the way down to you can't put them with other dogs or that they will turn on their owners. We've all heard these sort of myths that have been pervasive especially in the last, you know, 15 years or so. But all of those myths are based on this one gigantic myth is that the dogs are both unique and uniform.

So we have this big circle of all of the dogs and what we tend to do with pit bulls in our society is we remove them from the circle of dog, so you are not like other dogs. You are unique. We are going to take you out and put you over here. And then amongst themselves we decided they're all the same.

So not only are you different from all the other dogs, once we call you a pit bull you're the same as every other pit bull. And that's where – that's where all of these myths come into play. And what we say in our – from our shelters really does matter to the community and sometimes this happens very subtly and sometimes this happens very loudly with big policies.

But when we promote pit bull dogs for adoption and advocate for fair treatment as organizations or as individuals, but sort of out of the other side of our mouths tend to say "But they're not for everyone and you have to be a certain kind of person or you have to have a certain kind of home to adopt these dogs."

We're sending a seriously mixed message and all the public hears is that these dogs are different than other dogs and different in this case is scary.

And also becomes at a certain point deadly, because not only is it deadly if you're in an area with breed specific legislation obviously, but it also becomes deadly if you're a dog in a shelter that, you know, has to euthanize for space because as we saw in the slides earlier today that's the second group most at risk at this moment in time.

So this is just an example and I'm just going to go over a couple of these, in the interest of time. But, these are quotes from advocates, trainers, vets and shelters typically from websites or interactions, and then quotes from pro breed specific legislation cases or litigation of some sort.

So when we say there are too many irresponsible pit bull dog owners out there, which is something that we hear said a lot not always just from us, but it's something that the community reflects back at us, what gets heard especially from policymakers and decision makers is "Okay, I hear you. Too many irresponsible dog owners, so we're going to protect the public by just regulating the ownership of all of the dogs."

So since there are too many irresponsible ones to protect everyone else, we'll regulate the dogs instead of the humans, right. And the second most, I shouldn't say popular – the second most heard thing, I think, is that it's all in who they're raised and they can be great pets in the right hands.

And I fully recognize that this statement is typically said when it's said to me it's always said coming from a place of "I'm a safe person to talk to. I'm saying this to you because I want you to know that I don't – I'm not afraid of the dogs." But when we're saying this as the experts in the community, what gets heard is that the dogs are uniquely dangerous even to their owners.

And especially when they're improperly raised or trained. And for those of you who have taken dogs from cruelty cases or from dog fight busts, we know that this is not – this isn't a true statement. We get dogs from – and I mean this is not true about any dogs, but pit bulls included.

Dogs who sometimes have the worst situations and are raised improperly typically come into our care and for the most part everything ends up okay, and I'm obviously not saying this is a broad sweeping statement. There are some dogs who, you know, will have difficulty, but for the most part we know that a lot of dogs who are improperly raised or who we will never know how they were raised turn out perfectly fine.

And another thing to be very conscious about, I think, is this idea – because I think this is the most prevalent thing that I hear most often when I go to conferences, when I go to other shelters, typically I hear this is

"Well, we just have – we have a pit bull problem, that's why we want you to come. We have too many pit bulls in the shelter."

And this is absolutely something that comes from the shelter and it bleeds out into the community that there's too many of this dog, this type of dog. We really have to be careful about saying that kind of thing that has two major effects both related to this idea of psychic numbing. So what happens is when we say there's too many pit bull dogs is we're framing the dogs as a negative abstraction. It's no longer really about the dogs. We're talking about this broad idea of too many pit bull dogs and it becomes more than our brains can process at an individual level, so our words, when we frame animals for adoption in that way, it becomes negative, overwhelming and abstract which typically causes a freeze in the public's willingness to help.

So, if we're constantly having messages, you know, eke out into the community in one way or another, let's say there's too many pit bull dogs in our care, what the public hears is that sounds like a really big abstract problem and I'm not really sure how to even help with that. So rather than mobilizing them to come and adopt dogs, what it tends to do is freeze them up because they're not sure what they should do about this abstract issue.

And the other thing that happens in our shelters when that happens is really important for us as folks that work in this industry because we're not immune to psychic numbing. So when we are constantly saying these words, on a certain level we also become numb to the idea of individual dogs in our care and we start to think about the dogs in the shelter as a negative abstraction.

And the shelters where I see this most strongly are typically the ones that have policies that are still quite discriminatory against the dogs, and what happens is every dog that comes into the shelter, every new dog that we're labeling a pit bull really sucks the soul out of the people that work there because it doesn't become about that dog.

It becomes about "Oh man, there's another pit bull here and it's going to sit on the floor longer and it's going to – or maybe we're going to have to kill it." And all of this – all of this emotional weight gets put on the folks that work there and they're no longer able to see individual dogs either.

And it really affects our ability to make good adoption matches because we're projecting then our thoughts onto the public and assuming that nobody wants them. And we'll talk a little bit especially in marketing about how flawed this idea is that nobody wants to adopt a pit bull. So we talked about this.

Just focusing on the group of dogs rather than on the dog also puts the onus on the dog rather than the human component. The other thing that I wanted to talk about is outcome expectancy. So this has to do with sort of the answer to a lot of these issues really becomes about us really pleasing ourselves with our language within the shelter.

And as soon as we can free up ourselves a little bit more in regards to pit bull dogs that the public really will reflect that change back to us. And outcome expectancy – just to go over this very quickly is a result of a person's estimate that a given behavior will lead to certain outcomes.

And self-efficacy is expectations related to the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the desired outcome. So the next piece is the thing that I think is very important. In self-managed activities like sales which really we have to think of adoption counseling a lot like sales.

People who are skeptical about the possibility of an outcome occurring, so skeptical about people coming in and wanting to adopt pit bull dogs or about their ability to perform. So that also speaks to sometimes our lack of training in this field and a lack of professionalization tend to undermine their own efforts when they approach their limits.

So it's really this phenomenon that happens that if we don't believe that it's going to happen, it really does affect the outcome. And in this case if we believe that no one wants pit bulls, fewer people will come in and adopt them because that is the attitude that is being reflected to the public.

So we're also going to talk quickly and really broadly about policies and best practices for adoption especially as it relates, you know, we we're talking about this in the context of pit bulls, but again if you're making policies about any population that you care for related to this, I think that this will resonate.

So the first thing is a fair and equal adoption process. So punishing potential adopters with a hostile adoption process. So if you – if you have a special adoption process for pit bull dogs is a – tends to typically put a couple extra hoops in front of adopters who want to come adopt that group of dogs.

And what happens in that case is we're still sending a very strong message that this group of dogs is different than the other dogs in our care because you have to do something extra, something different if you want to adopt them. And the other thing that we don't typically think about that happens is that we are also undervaluing all the other dogs in our care.

And even when these policies come from a place of we want to protect the dog, we think it's in their best interest to sort of hand select who they go to in protection of the dogs. What happens in that case is an adopter has to consider that you don't care as much about the other dogs in your care.

You don't really care about what happens to those other dogs who aren't labeled pit bulls because you feel the need to only regulate owners of the dogs who are pit bulls. So that's an unintended consequence that we have to consider.

I also wanted to just speak very briefly about this illusion of control because I think as an industry we're getting much, much, much better about accepting that if we really want to save more lives and send more animals home that we have to loosen up a little bit with our adoption policies and procedures. But where I see it still getting a little sticky is with pit bull dogs.

So when we still have – and this sort of goes with unwritten and written policies. There's a whole lot less written policies surrounding pit bull dogs, but there are still a lot of ways in which we're – we have hang-ups about those dogs still internally in our industry and it still bleeds into our adoption process.

So this idea of the illusion of control this is from the report on adoption forum two which several major organizations and leaders in the field were involved in this. And I really think that this gets to what we really need to be thinking about when we're talking about adoption policies and procedures.

So, we think that having strict requirements and many barriers to overcome in order to qualify for adoption that we have instituted good control, so we're going to regulate. We are the gatekeepers of animals in that instance. Too often the effect is to turn adopters into liars and us into the adoption police.

The end result is that more of our animals will end up euthanized, while people who want animals will get them from commercial sources or from next-door neighbors. So it's also important to consider that there are a lot of ways still for people to get animals in our communities.

And if we want adoption to continue to trend as something popular and something popular and something that people want to do, we have to make adjustments to make that so. And I think the part about turning adopters into liars especially in the context of pit bull dogs and sort of blanket policy.

So if we tend to say about pit bull dogs that all of them are bad with other bad with other dogs, all of them can't go home with cats, or need to go into a home with children over 12 or whatever it is that we say, we essentially become the boy who cried wolf to our public.

So if they come on our Pet Finder page and all they see are those green, you know, no columns for cats and kids and dogs consistently, the effect of that is that they think these people have no idea what they're doing and so I'm going to tell them the truth about having another dog in my home or a cat in my home because this can't possibly be true for every single one of these dogs.

And on the flip side of that if they don't think that, what they're going to continue to think is that pit bulls are much different than the rest of the dogs in your shelter and there is no reason for them to come and adopt them. And that's where we end up in these cycles where the shelters continue to say we have too many pit bulls. We have – we play a role in that.

So again unwritten rules, I think, are actually much more pervasive at this point than major adoption policies on paper. But we have to consider that they're both unnecessary and ineffective and they continue to make adopting out pit bull dogs harder. So again that's speaking out of both sides of our mouths.

We want you to adopt the dogs, but, you know, you have to jump through these extra hoops. This is just an example. We just put together a quick list of any potential discriminatory hurdles. Special applications, special screening processes, whether that's policy or unwritten if you're doing background checks, if you have to do extra landlord or home checks for dogs that are pit bull dogs.

Blanket restriction on adopters, so that again just making a blanket statement "If you're a pit bull you can't go home with cats, kids, dogs, no same sex adoptions" which used to be more prevalent. I'm happy to say that that one is – I hear that less often. Mandatory training for adopters based on breed and not need.

So if you tend to send dogs home and typically I always think this is in an effort to be successful and to really give the dogs their best foot forward. But if you're doing this for only one group of dogs and it's based on the way that they look and not on the way that they act, so we're wasting resources then if we're only saying you need mandatory training –

And I wouldn't recommend mandating anything, but if you're saying you only need training to adopt pit bull dogs, what about the other dogs in our care that really could use maybe an extra helping hand to stay in their home. So this is where retention comes in which is increasingly important to our field, but if we're only focusing on pit bull dogs we're certainly missing out on a whole lot of other dogs who could use the resources.

Generalizations about suitability for adoptions, so assuming that all pit bull dogs are high energy, good with kids, so that is – I've been talking about a lot of negative stereotypes, but if we're stereotyping the dogs in a super positive way, we're also not being accurate. So it's incredibly inaccurate to refer to the dogs as nanny dogs because as we just talked about them – they're not genetically related.

They're – most of them are mixed breed dogs. So we can't make generalizations in either direction and still be telling the truth. And dog-dog, you know, assuming things about dog-dog interactions based on the way that the dog looks.
On a related note to that, I'm really excited to be talking after Amy and Dr. Crawford because I think that I'm sure already makes sense to you after seeing so many different kinds of dogs in play group together that we can't make assumptions about who they are especially in relation to other dogs based on the way that they look.

An intake or adoption floor decisions based on breed or visual ID alone. So, putting only some of your pit bull dogs on your adoption floor because you are assuming that the public doesn't want them, so making decisions for the public and not really considering that there is that they are going to make their own decisions and that if we stop doing subtle things like that, they're going to respond, you know, proportionally.

Mostly I just really like this picture and wanted to tell you that this dog's name is Monkey Business. So again when we're talking about blanket restrictions – it's not helpful to making policies and typically it will make your job much, much harder, because now you're policing this broad group who doesn't necessarily need the resources.

And helping adopters realize that they're adopting a dog and not a breed is increasingly important and I feel like we already touched on this and I have a couple quotes at the end that really get at that. Actually this is one of them. So this is from Alexander Horowitz and I think I really like this idea of helping adopters realize that batteries are not included in the dog, so especially as it relates to the breed label that we're giving them.

So the alleged predictability of personality is problematic for adopters when a dog does not behave in accordance with their billing, so what

we've labeled them. Owners call this a behavioral problem. Inadvertently breed standards lead potential adopters to treat them more like products with reliable features.

Dogs are individuals and should be treated thusly which I'm sure you guys are understanding is the point of all of this. And again by helping adopters connect with dogs based on their need and their expectation for a dog living in their home, rather than placing all of that information on breed alone is what will free us up to be making better adoption matches.

And also free us up to put some of our resources into place, like, and things like retention and really keeping dogs in their home and preventing them from coming to the shelter in the first place. And this is another quote that I really think drives home this point from Patricia McConnell. Just as people are individuals, dogs are individuals.

I think it's critical we understand that we're not looking at a golden retriever or a border collie, although we're certainly not dismissing, you know, breed traits in pure bred dogs, but that we're looking at Frank or Willie or Spot or Martha. So again getting down to this idea that we really do have to look at the dogs in front of us and evaluate them as the dogs in front of us.

And that is all I have. I think we have about five minutes for questions for this part and then we're going to talk about marketing in the second part after you guys take a little bit of a break. So does anybody have questions?

Question:	I was just going to ask the infographics that you had the series of, are those available?
Caitlin Quinn:	Yes. They are. Yes, they are. And I'm actually going to talk in the next session about – we have a ton of free resources, so I will tell you how to get those after in the next session.
Question:	This has been very interesting. We're not allowed to adopt out pit bulls, but everything you said about pit bulls refers to Bull Arabs, and if you don't know what Bull Arabs are Google them. It's an Australian breed of dog.
Caitlin Quinn:	Yeah
Question:	But I've just got a question because I'm not sure that I understood you correctly.
Caitlin Quinn:	Okay.

Question:	When you were talking about same sex adoptions. So you're saying you do or you don't do?
Caitlin Quinn:	Dogs. Same sex dogs. I should really clarify that.
Question:	Adopting dogs of the same sex.
Caitlin Quinn:	Yes. So sending – what we've heard typically – and this comes from, this is much more prevalent at this point in rescue than it is in anything else. But saying that if you are a pit bull and you are a male pit bull, you can only go home with another – with a female, that we would not place you with a male. And obviously I think Amy talked a little bit about some of the dogs in her videos being intact males, neutered males. There's – they're certainly not just a male and a female in the yard, right? And a lot of those dogs were pit bull dogs.
Question:	It – it's just that I, by the way I'm *[inaudible]* behaviorist who consults to RSPC Australia.
Caitlin Quinn:	Sure.
Question:	I wouldn't recommend same sex adoptions and we recently did quite a large study with a Survey Monkey study.
Caitlin Quinn:	Oh okay.
Question:	On ownership of two dogs in Australia and one of the only things we found that was significant was that two dogs of the same sex, two bitches in fact, the male dogs it didn't follow that were more likely to have fights requiring veterinary intervention, suturing, etcetera.
Caitlin Quinn:	Okay.
Question:	So I wouldn't – I'd probably be more likely to –
Caitlin Quinn:	I would love to talk to you about that. Yeah, can I – can we talk about that after?
Question:	Yeah.
Caitlin Quinn:	I would love to get more information from you.
Question:	Yeah, no problem.

Question: I'm in private practice and the term natural dog I think is fascinating. I think it's beautiful. And I think it should be used more often because I often ask what mix it is.

[End of Audio]