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LISTENING SESSION MINUTES

Meeting of October 23, 2013 – 6:00pm
Meeting held at:
Greenfield Public Library
5310 W. Layton Ave.
Greenfield, WI

Present:

Ms. Karen Sparapani, Executive Director (MADACC)
Dr. Libby Gutting, Medical Director (MADACC)
Kathy Shillinglaw – Friends of MADACC Vice Chair

1. Submitted Questions/Responses

Have you considered reaching out to prisons to see if they would be willing to let their inmates work with some of the dogs and cats at MADACC? I know this has been done successfully in other states.

I am aware of the very successful initiatives where shelters work with prisons to rehabilitate animals for adoption. Locally, I think Fox Valley Humane Society runs a very successful program with Sanger B. Powers Correctional Center in Oneida.

MADACC is currently not in a position to consider a program of that nature. We do not have a trainer or behaviorist on our staff who could oversee a program like that. We do not have the resources to effectively manage a program of this nature, and we do not have the facilities for a full scale adoption program to bring rehabilitated animals back into.

This is a program better taken on by a larger organization with the resources necessary to successfully attempt a program like this.

That said, should another shelter, rescue or 501(c)3 want to start a program like this, I would happily supply all the animals they could possibly want to participate!

I have put in an application for a beautiful girl you had shown during a recent event. Since we rent, the landlord needs to give permission. He always tells me that Milwaukee County Animal Control does not allow Pibble adoptions. Yes, I know.

When a message is left with our landlord, Pitbull is ALWAYS used and it makes me wonder: Is nearly every dog in your shelter being called a 'pitbull'?

If so, this great article from StubbyDog Project should be read. DNA tests of pit bull-looking dogs often come up with some surprising results. One dog, who looked to all intents and purposes like a pitbull, turned out to be 40 percent poodle!

Maybe most of our shelter dogs are truly just good old fashioned lovable mutts!- <http://www.pickthepit.com/>

Thank you so much for writing! I do not understand why your landlord would think we do not allow pitty adoptions...that is our main focus since most other shelters and rescues either won't take them, or cannot take them in the numbers we need to save lives. I hope that your landlord is pitty friendly and lets you adopt.

To answer your question, yes. Most dogs in this facility are labeled a pit – and you are welcome to go to our website and peruse the current photos of our residents and see for yourself by clicking the link for “Search for your lost companion” and selecting dog then search. You can see for yourself that to most people dogs labeled as pitbulls or pit mixes could at least be considered a pit mix.

Being in this industry for many years, I can share a different perspective for you to consider.

I worked at Elmbrook Humane Society which is primarily an adoption facility. When we had someone bring in a dog that they said was a Lab/Boxer mix – even if it looked pitty to us – we would list it as the Lab/Boxer mix. The dog would be adopted. Then it would be returned when the family brought the dog home their neighbors or veterinarian told them it looked like a pit to them. They would accuse us of lying to them to get a dog adopted. The dog would be all stressed out from leaving and coming back. This happened MANY times over. Some dogs took 3 or more homes until they found a family that did not mind if people thought the dog looked like a pit.

We had terrier mix puppies or lab mix puppies that were regularly returned when they got older and people felt that they got more pitty looking, or other people told them the dog was part pitbull. We had a man in tears once bawling his eyes out because he was returning the best dog he ever had because “my childrens’ lives are at stake”. I am not even exaggerating.

In my experience it is better to say to people that the dog might be pit or part pit up front. That way, if they have any reservations about bringing home a pit, they will just move on to a different dog instead of going through the motions with a dog they would never take home in the first place. Many people do not even know what pitbulls are and were surprised at how wonderful the dogs were when all they were used to hearing and seeing on TV was how they were blood thirsty killers. We placed lots of pits at EBHS to people who in a million years would never think they would adopt a pitty.

People get mad if they think you are trying to fool them or trick them by calling a pitty looking dog something else. It happened all the time.

Then, there were the people who came into EBHS to adopt a pitbull because they were new pitbull advocates and who took home a dog and had a DNA test done. They found out the dog had no pit in it at all and had to adopt another pitty type dog because they felt they were “posers”. This one had pit in it and the two dogs get along wonderfully. Happy ending!

Another problem is that all shelter animal software existing today requires you to pick a breed. There is no MUTT category. They ask you to pick either one or two breeds for every dog so even though most of the dogs here are “mutts” we are forced to pick breeds. I am not going to tell you anything you do not already know when I say that most shelter staff are TERRIBLE at breed identification. That said, the public would be even worse. We do the best we can with the resources available to us.

DNA testing shelter dogs is cost prohibitive, and quite frankly, I think the testing is not all that reliable. If there is a dog that looks like a pit, and the testing says it is something else, people can easily just say the test is wrong or

choose not to believe or trust the results anyway. DNA testing on dogs is not as accurate as on humans, especially not the kind available to consumers.

I stand by my feeling that it is better to give people the idea that the dog is a pit or pit mix because if they are fine with that, the adoption is likely to be a lot smoother. In fact, there are people that WANT to adopt pits to save them because let's face it, other than Chihuahuas, pits are the shelter dogs most likely to die in a shelter because of their breed.

I 100% agree with you that most of the dogs here are, in the end, just the loveable mutts. Someday, I hope breed won't matter to anyone.