

## INGRID NEWKIRK

# Deadly, abused, doomed

Norfolk, Virginia

**M**OST PEOPLE have no idea that at many animal shelters across the country, any "pit bull" who comes through the front door goes out the back door — in a body bag.

From San Jose to Schenectady, many shelters have enacted policies requiring the automatic destruction of the huge and ever-growing number of "pits" they encounter. This news shocks and outrages the compassionate dog-lover.

Here's another shocker: People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, the very people who are trying to get you to denounce the killing of chickens for the table, foxes for fur, or frogs for dissection, supports the pit bull policy, albeit with reluctance.

The pit bull's ancestor, the Staffordshire terrier, is a human concoction, bred in my native England, I'm ashamed to say, as a weapon.

These dogs were designed specifically to fight other animals and kill them, for human sport. Hence the barrel chest, the thick hammer-like head, the strong jaws, the perseverance and the stamina.

Pits can take down a bull weighing in at over a thousand pounds, so a human being a tenth of that weight is small potatoes to them.

Pit bulls are perhaps the most abused dogs on the planet. These days, they are kept for protection by almost every drug dealer and pimp in every major city and beyond.

You can drive into any depressed area and see them being used as cheap burglar alarms, wearing heavy logging chains around their necks (they easily break regular collars and harnesses), attached to a stake or metal drum or rundown doghouse without a floor and with holes in the roof.

Bored juveniles sic them on cats, neighbors' small dogs and even children. In the PETA office we have a file drawer chock-full of accounts of attacks in which these ill-treated dogs have torn the faces and fingers off infants and even police officers trying to serve warrants.

Today, organizing dog fights is a federal offense in this country, yet pits are still king of the ring. Humane officers and other law enforcement agents routinely break up rings in New Mexico, Massachusetts, Michigan and Florida.

They confiscate dog-fighting paraphernalia, including treadmills used to build doggie endurance and drugs used

*Ingrid Newkirk is president of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. Web site: [www.PETA-online.org](http://www.PETA-online.org).*



EXAMINER / KATY RADDATZ

to numb pain from injuries inflicted by opponents and to "jazz up" the dogs. They find mesh bags in which kittens, rabbits, puppies and other small prey are suspended over the dogs to encourage fighting spirit.

Not uncommonly, they find what's left of dogs who have lost their battles.

They are not always dead.

Those who argue against the euthanasia policy for pit bull dogs are naive. One dog I know who was adopted out to a new family suddenly clamped his jaw onto the thigh of a 7-year-old boy. Two grown men had a hard time getting the dog off and the child suffered permanent nerve damage.

Tales like this abound. I have scars on my leg and arm from my own encounter with a pit.

Many are loving and will kiss on sight, but many are unpredictable. An unpredictable chihuahua is one thing, an unpredictable pit another.

People who genuinely care about dogs won't be affected by a ban on pits.

They can go to the shelter and save one of the countless other breeds and lovable mutts sitting on death row through no fault of their own.

We can only stop killing pits if we stop creating new ones. Legislators, please take note.