

CULTURAL SHIFTS AND THE BRAVE NEW WORLD FACING OUR COMMUNITY AND THEIR BULL TERRIERS

A Special Seminar with Mary Remer

Before you come to the National Weekend, we invite you to think.

Not simply about the Bull Terrier we have known and loved.

But about the world into which we are asking the Bull Terrier to live.

A **cultural shift** is a significant change in the beliefs, values, expectations, and everyday practices of a society. It changes how people live, how families function, what they value—and ultimately, how they interact with the animals who share their lives.

And whether we recognize it or not, **the world around our Bull Terriers is changing.**

We live in an increasingly urban and suburban society. Families are busier. Time is shorter. Financial pressures are greater. Children and adults alike experience increased stress and anxiety. Life often seems to be lived at a faster pace:

Hurry up. Get ready. Move on to the next thing.

Our dogs live within that world.

They reflect the tenor of the households in which they live, yet they are still dogs—with canine needs, instincts, communication styles, and an essential nature that we cannot simply expect them to abandon because modern life has become more complicated.

As Mary has reminded us during our Town Halls and Preservation Breeder Panel discussions:

Dogs are having trouble maintaining their core canine self—their essence—in the world we are asking them to live in.

So, what does this mean for the Bull Terrier?

The Bull Terrier is not a generic dog.

He comes into the world with his own unique character, energy, physical presence, and attitude toward life. He is courageous, spritely, fun-loving, sometimes obstinate, and unmistakably himself.

But how does that Bull Terrier successfully navigate **today's world—and tomorrow's?**

THE QUESTIONS WE WILL EXPLORE

How do we breed and rear Bull Terriers for the world in which they actually live today?

How do we properly socialize and prepare a Bull Terrier so that he can navigate the world without frustration, fear, or unnecessary conflict?

How do we allow dogs to remain dogs—and Bull Terriers to remain Bull Terriers—while helping them become happy, fulfilled members of modern society?

And perhaps the most difficult question of all:

Are we breeding for the future—or breeding as though the world has not changed?

WHAT DOES “CORRECT TEMPERAMENT” LOOK LIKE TODAY?

The FCI Breed Standard describes the Bull Terrier as:

“Courageous, full of spirit, with a fun-loving attitude. Of even temperament and amenable to discipline. Although obstinate, [he] is particularly good with people.”

It further reminds us that faults must be considered in proportion to their degree and **their effect upon the health and welfare of the dog.**

Aggression and excessive shyness are disqualifying faults.

Those words deserve serious thought.

Because temperament is not merely about whether a dog is “easy” or “difficult.”

Temperament affects:

- The dog’s quality of life.
 - The family’s quality of life.
 - The ability of the dog to live safely and comfortably in society.
 - The breeder’s ability to responsibly place puppies.
 - Public perception of our breed.
 - And ultimately, the future preservation of the Bull Terrier itself.
-

THE TEMPERAMENT PYRAMID:

Several years ago, a discussion was introduced concerning a temperament model developed by Susanne Shelton (Austerlitz German Shepherds and renowned Professional Dog Trainer) around the concept of breeding dogs who could successfully live in the world into which they were born.

Imagine an **inverse pyramid**.

At the broad, ideal foundation are the greatest number of dogs—the temperament we should be striving to produce most consistently.

These are dogs who are:

- Confident and clear in the head.
- Pleasant to live with.
- Sociable and tolerant of people (and other dogs?).
- Adaptable to new places, people, and experiences.
- Enthusiastic about life, work, and learning.
- Capable of excitement—but also capable of calming themselves and settling.
- Willing to cooperate and negotiate with their people.

Yes, we are talking about Bull Terriers.

They do not have to become Golden Retrievers.

They should still be full of life.

They should still be funny.

They should still have opinions.

But a Bull Terrier can be unmistakably a Bull Terrier while also possessing the confidence, stability, and adaptability necessary to live successfully in the modern world.

As we move upward through the pyramid, we encounter increasing temperament concerns:

- Dogs who may be excessively reactive.
- Dogs who cannot de-escalate.
- Dogs who struggle with sociability, tolerance, adaptability, or self-regulation.
- Dogs whose energy and reactions make them increasingly difficult to live with.

And finally, at the narrowest point—the least desirable outcome—are dogs who are unable to safely or comfortably cope with ordinary life:

- Dogs whose responses to benign situations are fear or aggression.
- Dogs who are mentally unsound.
- Dogs who suffer because they cannot successfully navigate the world around them.

Nobody wins when this happens.

Not the dog.

Not the owner.

Not the breeder.

Not the breed.

A COMMUNITY'S RESPONSIBILITY

Perhaps we should ask ourselves:

What percentage of the puppies we produce are truly prepared—genetically and developmentally—to thrive in ordinary, appropriate homes?

Should our goal be that the **vast majority of Bull Terriers we produce—perhaps 80% or more—possess correct breed temperament and can be successfully placed in good, knowledgeable homes?**

There will always be individual dogs with greater drive, greater intensity, or special needs.

There may be exceptional dogs for exceptional homes.

And even the most thoughtful breeding program can occasionally produce an unexpected behavioral outlier.

But should those dogs be the exception—or should difficult temperaments become something we quietly accept as part of producing Bull Terriers?

The answer to that question may determine a great deal about the future of our breed.

Good homes exist for Bull Terriers with correct temperament.

Our responsibility is to produce more dogs who can thrive in those homes.

That means using every tool available to us:

- Thoughtful selection.
- Honest evaluation.
- Knowledge of our bloodlines.
- Understanding temperament.
- Proper puppy rearing.
- Appropriate socialization.
- Education of owners.

And, perhaps most importantly, the willingness to look honestly at what we are producing.

LET'S HAVE THE CONVERSATION

This seminar is **not** about turning Bull Terriers into something they are not.

It is not about removing their courage, their individuality, or their glorious Bull Terrier attitude.

It is about asking:

How do we preserve the essence of the Bull Terrier while preparing him for the reality of the world in which he must live?

How do we preserve correct breed character without accepting behavioral problems that compromise the dog's welfare?

How do we recognize the difference between a true Bull Terrier personality and a dog who is struggling?

How do breeders respond to a society in which homes, neighborhoods, families, expectations, and lifestyles have changed dramatically?

And perhaps most importantly:

What kind of Bull Terrier must we preserve for the generations yet to come?

COME READY TO THINK. COME READY TO LISTEN. COME READY TO TALK.

This is a conversation for breeders.

For exhibitors.

For owners.

For preservationists.

For newcomers.

For anyone who cares deeply about the future of the Bull Terrier.

There may not be easy answers.

But there are questions that deserve to be asked.

The world has changed.

Our responsibility to the Bull Terrier has not.

Let's talk about the Brave New World – and how we ensure that our Bull Terriers continue to thrive within it.

Cultural Shifts and the Brave New World Facing our community and Their Bull Terriers

With Mary Remer

At the BTCA National Specialty Weekend

Come prepared for a thoughtful, honest, and important conversation.