

What should I know about Airedale temperaments?

In addition to the intelligence, sense of humor, courage, faithfulness, and playfulness described elsewhere, there are several Airedale characteristics that fall under "behavior". First, be aware that these dogs are very stoic and can be in a great deal of pain or distress and not show it outwardly. This means they can be in more serious condition due to illness or injury than might be apparent. Second, these dogs can become "dominant" and be deliberately disobedient toward individuals they consider submissive. This is not a breed for the mild-mannered or casual dog owner. Third, they easily become bored and restless, particularly if left to their own initiative as "backyard dogs". They can become destructive or escapists or just so independent that they seem not to care. Once these events occur, it is VERY difficult to correct. These dogs thrive as family members, particularly after appropriate training. Fourth, with some people, including some vets, Airedales have had a reputation for aggressiveness. When I first discovered this, I was surprised since it was the opposite of my rather extensive experience with the breed. Historically, the breed has had periods of great popularity, and this often results in inferior dogs being bred. Bad temperaments result and I think this has occurred in Airedales in the past. To get some perspective on current opinions of dog breeds by veterinarians, I conducted a survey of other vets around the world via the Internet. The question was regarding which breeds were most troublesome visitors to their clinic, with each breed given a numerical rating. Most dogs at vet clinics are quite good, especially under the circumstances. The vet clinic is a very stressful environment for a dog. It smells strange, it is noisy and strangers restrain, poke and prod at the dogs. Some breeds handle it with grace, some try to attack the vet and the staff. However, worldwide vets agreed that Rottweilers and Chows typically were terrible. Chihuahuas were almost as bad, temperamentally, but they were so small, no one cared. Labradors were the example of good-natured, non-problems in the survey and this held up worldwide. Labs are popular and should be. Even an idiot has a hard time messing up a lab! Other "bad" breeds at vet clinics were Shar-pei's and Fila brisilias. Cocker spaniels are either wonderful or awful without much middle ground, and they were frequently mentioned as problems at the vet clinic. Pit bulls also got mixed results. Most with experience with the breed regarded them well.....unless the owner was an idiot that encouraged aggressiveness. Dobermans scored well, despite the reputation. Had the same survey been done at the height of the breed's popularity a few years ago, they would have scored poorly. Now, the

popularity fad has passed and the breed reputation has been restored. Boxers did surprisingly well, almost the same as labs! The point to the story, of course, is Airedales....they scored well, about in the middle ("typical dog that comes to the clinic") range. For scale, Labs and boxers scored about 1.8, Rottweilers (the current fad breed) scored about 4.5 on a scale up to 5 for bad behavior at the vet clinic. The score for the "average" dog that walks into the clinic is 2.1. Airedales scored about 2.1. Most mentioned problem seen with Airedales is hyperactivity at the clinic. A lot of vets had no experience with the breed or their opinion was shaped by exposure to one or two dogs.