

Catahoula Temperament Information

There seems to be some misconceptions as to what a Catahoula is and what their temperament is like. So let's clear up misconception as they may be and set things straight. The Catahoula is a hunting dog, even though some sites will classify it as a herding dog. In describing the temperament of the Catahoula, part of that needs to address the breed's working/hunting drive, because this adds to and makes up the total dog. You can't really separate this drive from the rest of the dog's temperament.

A good Catahoula should be driven by "game instinct" and the "desire to please its owner". These are traits that must be bred into them; they can't be taught nor learned. These instincts are an inherited response or reaction to the stimuli around them. All the working drive in the world is of little value, if the dog does not have the desire to please its owner; to be proud of a job well done and content by a positive word and a pat on the head. A Catahoula should be working and playing WITH you not just for itself.

A dog with a strong working and hunting instinct, a good nose on a track and the desire to "work" at a job, and to please their owner but not a dog that is driven to excessive behavior. In other words, though they love working, hunting, treeing, and baying they are not driven to extreme – to be "on edge" all the time - in working mode constantly. This type of personality is unnecessary in any good working dog and makes that dog hard to live with. Although Catahoulas could run in the woods for hours, the common concept we have found is the TIME spent with the dog, not necessarily the ACTIVITY being done is what's important for their overall daily happiness and well-being. **(Remember that physical well-being usually means mental well-being also!)**

A Catahoula's drive can appear aggressive at times - when the dog is baying a hog or cow. Or face to face with a coon on the ground and they will stop at very little in their quest to kill it. But aggressive should not describe the Catahoula's temperament, only their game drive.

They also need to have a very fast reaction time; their natural instincts make them move without thinking - "Instinctively". It is what keeps them alive in front of adversaries so much larger and stronger than themselves – they can react in a split second.

But it's also what might get them in trouble in certain situations – times of high excitement, whether it's six kids running around, laughing and screaming, or other dogs playing hard or a cat running by in front of them. Their reaction time to these stimuli may be very quick and an owner needs to be able to read how the dog is thinking and how it will react in certain situations.

Catahoulas do not always get along with other strange dogs especially of the same sex. They do not back down easily, and most are not interested in being "second best". Around other dogs,

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an owner must pay attention to the signals their dog is giving and the signals another dog is giving to their dog.

It's also important to remember that the Catahoula's first instinct is to protect its family. If they perceive a threat to you they will make themselves be known. Mostly I have found this to be a stepping in front of you and the "threat", maybe a few barks, but not over the top extreme protection. You should be able to tell by your dog's movements how they are feeling about the situation. If they are not at ease, you will know and the dog should be addressed and told that "everything is fine".

Catahoulas do not have the happy-go-lucky, devil-may-care temperament of a Lab or a Golden Retriever. They can be "amiable" or maybe even "indifferent" with others, especially people they don't know well but devotedly happy and enthusiastic with their own family.

While a Catahoula may appear to be stand-offish or reserved, they should never be shy, fearful or timid. These are very undesirable traits in the breed and if breeding a dog with this temperament this will be passed down to future generations.

They are not always the easiest breed of dog to live with and they are definitely not for everyone, but if you enjoy challenge - a dog that can actually still think for itself and possesses the natural characteristics that made it irreplaceable to farm and rural families many decades ago; a dog that will protect and watch over your home and family; a dog that will make you laugh, either by its antics or quick thinking, then a Catahoula may be for you.

(Adapted from Cat's Cradle Catahoula website)