



# The Angel Report

## Black Dog Syndrome

The scene is the same in shelters and rescue organizations around the country, rows of black dogs gazing hopefully at families as they pass by them on the way to play with the lighter dogs. This scene is so common, that it has become a problem known as 'Black Dog Syndrome'. Black dogs are frequently overlooked for adoption, especially if the dog is larger. This has led to a high rate of euthanization for these dark companion animals



non, but there are many possibilities that could contribute to people making the unconscious choice to adopt lighter colored animals; Many are concerned about dark dog hair on the furniture, believing they shed more than light breeds. The truth is, several breeds of dark dogs shed less than lighter ones, however the hair is more visible on furniture. Black dogs are at an immediate disadvantage because they don't show as well as lighter shade dogs. Black dogs aren't as photogenic either.

MSNBC ran a story on "Black Dog Syndrome on March 5, 2008. Here Madeline Bernstein, president of the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in Los Angeles states, "They're the hardest to adopt out, they're in the shelters the longest and therefore, they're most likely to be euthanized if nothing happens" (for the rest of the story see <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/23472518/>)

There is no solid explanation behind the 'Black Dog Syndrome' phenome-

Rescue Angels is promoting "Black Dog Syndrome" awareness for the month of February. Please don't overlook these precious pups just because of their color! Many of our Rescue Angels volunteers have rescued black dogs themselves and can speak from experience when they say that these guys make fantastic pets (and the shedding CAN be controlled!)

We would love to hear updates

## Volunteer of the Month—Lisa Schreiber!



Lisa runs "Wagtime" a doggy day care facility in NW DC and consistently boards several of the Rescue Angels dogs at no charge! She also offers discounted day care services to any Rescue Angels adopter. On several occasions Lisa has reached into her own pocket to help a Rescue Angels dog get much needed veterinary care and makes it her mission to find homes for even our "problem children". A big "Tip of the Tail" to Lisa for the Month of February!

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*"Dogs are not our whole lives, but they make our lives whole"—Roger Caras*

## 6 Ways to Exercise with your Dog



Did you make a new years resolution to get fit? Well take Fido with you! There are more overweight and obese dogs in the world today than at any other time in history. Exercising with your dog not only strengthens the bond you share with him or her, it also keeps you both healthy! Proper exercise also encourages good behavior in your canine. Here are some good exercise outlets for you AND your dog:

**1. Take a walk.** One of the easiest and still the best ways of getting some exercise for your dog (and for yourself) is to simply take your dog for a walk. No matter where you live, walking with your dog is a great way to get some exercise, enjoy the outdoors and to spend some quality time together.

**2. Play a sport.** Do you or your dog enjoy a special activity? Have you ever wanted to try flyball, Frisbee, or even Doga (Yoga)? There's no reason why you and your dog shouldn't sign up for a fun activity together. Many exercise facilities are becoming more "dog friendly" and this is a great way to meet other pet owners with interests similar to yours!

**3. Jog with your dog.** Many people enjoy jogging. There's no reason why your dog can't accompany you. You shouldn't take a puppy jogging with you since jogging on pavement can be bad for his joints and tendons and making a puppy run more than a short distance is a bad idea, but otherwise a dog can be a great jogging partner. It's great exercise for a dog just as it is for you.

**4. Bike with your dog.** Many people who enjoy bicycling like to take their dogs with them. There are Springer attachments that fit on bikes to make it easy to keep your dog attached while you ride. Again, don't overdo it with puppies. Otherwise biking with a dog is great exercise and something you can enjoy together.

**5. Take a hike.** Many people love to go hiking with their dogs. Great scenery, great exercise and wonderful quality time together. Pet product companies even make backpacks for dogs so that your dog can carry his own water and treats.

**6. Go for a swim.** Many dogs love to swim. Some dogs take to it naturally while others may need a little coaxing. But swimming is great exercise. Whether you have your own pool or you decide to use a nearby lake, swimming and water sports are something that you and your dog can enjoy together. Make sure to get your dog a life jacket -- bright colors and proper fit are important. If you're using a pool be sure to show your dog the steps and teach him how to get out.

Its important to remember that all exercise with your pet should be weather appropriate. As we move towards the warmer seasons, remember that there are many kinds of exercise that you can enjoy with your dog. The key is to get out and do something that you and your dog will enjoy, and therefore continue. You and your dog can have a lot of fun together and you won't feel like couch potatoes! Worst case you can always visit the local dog park...

"There are more overweight and obese dogs in the world today than any other time in history"



## *"Second Chance for Love" Adoption Weekend*

Rescue Angels will once again be participating in Petsmart Charities® "Second Chance for Love Adoption Weekend"! The DC area Rescue Angels will be holding two adoption Events at the Potomac Yard Petsmart the weekend of February 12-14 in an effort to help Petsmart Charities® reach their goal of adopting over 16,000 dogs! Please come out and show your support for all of the Rescue Angels Volun-

teers and pooches during this special weekend! Also take a moment to let friends and family know that there's no time like Valentines day to make another special addition to the family and give all of the Rescue Angels babies a "Second Chance for Love!" For more information please see <http://www.petsmartcharities.org/>



## *Share the Love!*

Do you want to give a little back this Valentines Day? Share a little love and volunteer more in your community? Well, we think Rescue Angels has just what you're looking for and boy, can we use all the help we can get! Rescue Angels is looking for volunteers to help with the following:

**\*Fostering-** Love dogs but aren't sure whether you're ready to commit to one 100%? Foster one of our adoptable pups and give him a warm home until he finds his forever home! We cover all expenses including food, vetting, etc.

**\*Volunteer at adoption events-** We are in DESPERATE need of volunteers for our adoption events. Can't have dogs in your apartment but want to be able to play with them- come bond at the adoption events! We hold adoption events on Saturdays and Sundays from 1-3pm at the Potomac Yards Petsmart in Alexandria. Once you become familiar with the process you can even become an adoption day POC and be in charge of running one to two events a month - this is a great resume builder!

**\*Transport-** We need volunteers to transport dogs from Wagtime, a doggy day care in DC, to our adoption events and back. You can use your own vehicle if you prefer or we can supply you with our Rescue Angels van! We also need volunteers to transport our foster dogs to vet appointments- most vet appointments (including spay/neuter) are during daytime hours and because many of us work full-time jobs during the day we have difficulty getting the dogs to their much-needed appointments.

**\*Check references-** We ask that all applicants provide at least 2 references for us to contact- we would LOVE if you could help us make the phone calls to determine whether applicants are approved or not. The quicker we get references checked, the quicker our dogs can be in their homes and we can pull new dogs from dire situations! This position can be done from home and requires little of your time!

**\*Volunteer Coordinator-** Our current volunteer coordinator has become very busy at work and would love if someone could assume her responsibilities, these include- sending out weekly emails to our volunteers to determine who can attend the adoption events and running adoption events (running adoption events is usually alternated with 2 other people so you would probably run 1-2 events a month)

**\*Fundraising-** Rescue Angels currently has no one to organize fundraiser events. As a small rescue we could use all of the funds we can get to try and save as many dogs as possible!

Due to liability issues we do ask that you be 18 or older to volunteer with Rescue Angels. Rescue Angels is happy to accommodate internships/required volunteer hours requests!

If you have any questions about how you could help save the lives of poor, innocent dogs, feel free to email us at [Bridgett@rescueangels.org](mailto:Bridgett@rescueangels.org) or check out our website at [www.rescueangels.org](http://www.rescueangels.org).

*Come out and support the Rescue Angels Volunteers and Pooches at the Second Chance for Love Adoption Weekend February 12-14!*



# Dear Midwoof

Dear Midwoof,

We have a 2 year old female shepherd mix that we adopted a couple of months ago. She is the sweetest thing ever and we love her to death, but anytime a new person comes near her she growls, barks a lot and tries to nip them. Any advice? It's been hard to hire a dog walker. Would you suggest a training collar to inhibit the behavior?

Sincerely,

Concerned New Owner

Dear Concerned,

First and foremost, be sure to have your dog checked by a vet to make sure none of these reactive behaviors stem from a physical problem. Without meeting your dog, I am going to guess that your dog has some fear issues that cause aggressive behavior. While there are occasional dogs that are just plain aggressive, most of them are exhibiting fear-based reactive behaviors. Unfortunately it all looks the same. Somewhere along the line she learned that retreating doesn't work and she has to defend herself instead.

These are actually pretty common problems in herding breeds. They tend to be intelligent and high energy, which leaves them prone to a lot of pent up energy that can manifest in nervousness. I will tell you some of the techniques with which I have found success and I encourage you to seek out a professional trainer – preferably one who uses positive reinforcement techniques and is experienced in fear issues.

I don't believe in the use of electric shock, prong or choke collars - I think they ultimately aggravate the situation, even if they alleviate obvious symptoms. You are causing pain to a fearful dog with these collars, which is counterproductive to calming them and changing their behaviors. The most I would do in that vein is a citronella collar with her for barking if it becomes incessant in specific circumstances (for example, if she barks like crazy whenever you are in the car) - but without consistency it is use-

less. For walking, an easy walk harness can be incredibly useful and is a gentle option to help you maintain control.

Other ideas:

1) Make sure she is on a food that has no corn and has whole meat as a primary ingredient and no by-products. Most of the better dog foods like Solid Gold, INOVA and Wellness brands will meet the criteria. It might not sound like a big deal but corn can mess up a high energy dog and a change of food is the first step to a positive difference. I have witnessed it firsthand.

2) Get her to the off leash dog park where she can flat out run and play with other dogs at least twice a week. You may be tempted to take her every day, but I have found diminishing returns with that approach because it causes too much adrenaline in the system, which causes more anxious behaviors. 2-4 times a week is ideal, with alternate/ additional exercise the other days of the week (long walks, games of fetch, etc). Note: you need to exercise the dog well every single day. Use common sense regarding other people in the park. Many times dogs will react differently in an off-leash environment and not exhibit the same reactive behaviors. (You might consider introducing a new dog walker in this environment for this reason.) Be sure you have trained your dog in a reliable recall command. But if you need to use a muzzle to ensure the safety of others in the dog park, do so. Just make sure it is one in which she can freely pant. Have your trainer show you how to acclimate her to it so she does not fear it.

3) Work on training exercises with her constantly, especially recalls. This will get her into the habit of listening to you and trusting you to direct her, and it will provide mental stimulation which uses up some of that excess energy. Whistle for her to come to you, do targeting exercises (that is when she touches her nose to your hand), have her sit - in particular I would put her in a sit every single time before she eats or comes to a curb. If you get her

to the point where she is automatically listening to you bc she is so used to following your commands, then she is a little easier to guide when she is in a stressful situation.

4) Always make sure she has a big bone on which to chew - this helps release more energy and anxiety. Also, give her puzzle toys to play with to engage her mind and release energy in that way. Treat balls are great for this – the Molecule Ball is my personal favorite but there are tons of mentally engaging toys around. You can even choose to feed her meals out of a treat ball, which will keep your dog from getting an overabundance of treats, since you will be training all the time as well. :-)

5) Try to maintain the mindset that you are her protector and will let nothing hurt her. If you come across someone new, I would always stand in front of her upon meeting. Everything from your posture to your tone of voice should convey to her that you are in control of the situation and she is safe.

6) Consciously relax yourself when you approach a person you know is more likely to set her off (for example, a child). When you know the dog is reactive it is a natural tendency to tense up and that definitely makes her worse. Visualize her getting along fine and *expect* that of her, even if you are proven wrong repeatedly.

7) Direct the other person what to do when they meet or approach your dog. Tell them not to look her in the eye, which can be threatening. Let her approach them first. Do not reach for her and especially do not reach over her to pet her. Do not smile at her (that is baring teeth which can be an aggressive sign to a dog.) Finally, never let her get behind someone who is bothersome to her - it will increase the chance of a nip.

8) Recognize that growling is OK. It is not ok in people world, but in a dog's world it is the polite thing to do. She is alerting you to the fact that she is not comfortable in the situation and should not be pushed further. If you can accept the growl and respond in a way that makes sense to her (let her back off or don't force her to confront in any way), you will start to relax. When she growls you are

likely tensing up bc you are either worried about what she will do or you are embarrassed she is growling. She feels that tension and thinks "ah ha! I was right! I *\*should\** be concerned about this situation." And it escalates from there. Growling, barking and nipping are all stages toward a bite - all are warnings and in dog language, meaning "get me out of here before I feel like I have to bite and defend myself."

9) A good technique to use when people come over if she is being protective of the house is teaching her the "place" command and combine it with "stay". Basically you teach her to go to a certain spot, mat, or dog bed, whenever you say "place" (you can point as a visual command.) Get her really good at it and then when people come over you tell her "place" before you open the door. It'll take some practice with people coming to the door so you could practice with a neighbor or friend.

10) If she is good at targeting with you, you could teach her how to "say hello" by touching someone else's hand with her nose. The trainer could help you with this. I am not sure I would recommend it if she's being nippy though. Alternatively, if you can have the person approaching have treats on hand, she will begin to positively associate new people with good things happening. They should not try to give her the treat directly, but drop it in front of them so she can get it herself.

11) A great book I recommend is *Help For Your Fearful Dog* by Nicole Wilde.

12) If you try all of this and consult with a trainer and nothing works well after an honest go of it, consult with your vet and investigate mood balancing medications like prozac. I do not like to go to this option until all else is exhausted, but I also believe in utilizing all the tools at your disposal to allow your dog a happy and relaxed life.

Best of luck!

# A Big Thank-You to...

- Our **adopters** who saved a life!
- All of our **individual contributors**
- All of our **volunteers** who foster, transport, check references, work at adoption events, and MUCH more!
- The **veterinarians** who work with our rescue: Caring Hands Veterinary Clinic, Hybla Valley Veterinary Hospital, and Spay Now, Inc.
- The **Potomac Yards Petsmart** for hosting our weekly DC area adoption events.
- **Woof & Whimsy's owner Susan** who allows our Boston location to host adoption days at her store .
- **Wagtime** who graciously cares for and loves some of our DC dogs when we don't have foster homes to place them in.
- The many **shelters** that allow us to rescue animals who otherwise would be euthanized.
- A special DC thanks to **Pets from Paradise** in St. Croix who goes above and beyond to send us dogs from the Virgin Islands!
- A special Boston thanks to **Companion Pet Rescue & Transport** in Tennessee who fosters and transports all of our Boston location pups!
- The **Animal control officers** at the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria who recently donated several bags of dog food to our DC area pups!

## DC Area Featured Pooch— *EARL!*



**Age:** ~ 3-4 Years

**Sex:** Male

**Breed:** Pure Bred Cocker Spaniel

**About:** Earl is great with other dogs and loves all people! He's been raised inside and is house trained. He's super sweet and social and will make a great companion! He's about 5-10 pounds overweight but other than needing to shed a few pounds, he got a clean bill of health at his vet check.

## Boston Area Featured Pooch— *SHIRLEY!*



**Age:** ~ 3-Years

**Sex:** Female

**Breed:** Basset Hound Mix

**About:** This sweet little girl is Shirley. She's very portable at approx. 20 lbs. You won't meet a nicer girl. Shirley was saved from a hoarding situation and is now in a loving foster home. She gets along great with kids, dogs, cats. She is crate and potty trained. Shirley LOVES to snuggle!

# Who We Are

**Rescue Angels, Inc.**

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Rescue Angels, Inc. is a public non-profit, registered 501(c)(3) charity created to rescue, rehabilitate and find permanent homes for abandoned or homeless dogs that are on the verge of being euthanized.

We believe that all dogs deserve to live happy and healthy lives, so we work toward finding ours loving, responsible homes where they will have a nurturing environment for the rest of their lives.

Because we are not a shelter, we rely solely on our caring, responsible foster homes, volunteers and donations to help us accomplish our longer-term goal of finding the best permanent home for each of our dogs.

Come visit us at any of our weekly adoption events, and you may just find the pet you were missing.



**We're on the web! Visit us at  
[www.rescueangels.org](http://www.rescueangels.org)!**

*Licks and Nudges,  
The Rescue Angels Team*