



# TIPS FOR PHOTOGRAPHING BLACK ANIMALS

Created for Purina® by HeARTs Speak

It's a theory at the forefront of animal sheltering: black animals seem to have a harder time generating the same degree of interest from potential adopters as their blonde, brown, striped, and speckled counterparts. There are a few possible explanations floating around for why this is. It could be due to the fact that there are just more black pets in general, or it could be because black dogs truly are less appealing to the public, as some studies suggest.

The good news is that, whatever the reason, we as photographers have the exciting opportunity to help every shelter pet get their moment in the spotlight, regardless of the obstacles they're navigating on their way to a home.

## SET YOURSELF UP FOR SUCCESS

Choose a spot with an uncluttered background, or plan on using a shallow depth of field to blur objects out of your control.

## COLOR OUTSIDE THE LINES

What looks good with black? Everything! Let your imagination loose with props and backdrops, adding thoughtful pops of eye-catching color where you can. Bandanas, blankets, collars, accessories, and even the wall in the background have the potential to transform your black-coated subject into a bright spark.

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## FIND THE RIGHT LIGHT INDOORS

If you're shooting indoors, choose a room that is flooded with diffused light and is bright, but not in direct sunlight. It's best to position your subject with a large window behind you. This will illuminate the details of their facial features. Also, avoid using your on-camera flash. This creates a harsh, yellow-tinged light that won't do that black coat justice.

## SEEK SHADE OUTDOORS

Contrary to the popular misconception that black animals are best photographed in direct sunlight outside, shade is actually your best friend for outdoor shoots. Choose an area of open shade, such as under a covered patio, and position your subject so the source of the light shines in from behind you. This will help make your subject's eyes look bright—and that's a feature you definitely want to accentuate for black animals!

## SHOOTING IN THE STUDIO

Keep your setup simple with one diffused light source such as a large umbrella or soft-box. Less is more and that one good source of light is all you'll need to illuminate black animals.

Worry less about your exposure, and more about moving your main light to be level with your camera. This will increase the shine reflected off your subject's coat, while handily helping to fill in those pesky shadows that keep black animals from appearing their best.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Due to the absence of their natural furry highlights, black animals can lack immediately visible facial expressions and character. However, with a well-lit, thoughtfully composed photo, they'll enjoy the same expressive portraits of their brighter pack mates.

### To help their faces shine:

- Avoid highly contrasted images
- Steer clear of deep shadows
- Make the most of the feature that will always be ready to work the camera: eyes. Highlight them, focus on them, and consider including props or accessories that complement them.



**HEARTS SPEAK IS A GLOBAL COMMUNITY OF PHOTOGRAPHERS**, writers, graphic designers, sculptors, painters, illustrators, shelter staff, rescue volunteers, and animal advocates working together to ensure that no shelter animal goes unseen. HeARTs Speak's artist members, more than 600 strong across the globe, provide their time and professional services pro bono to animal welfare organizations in their communities and work to improve the image of all shelter pets. At last count, these hard-working artists were working in approximately 1/3 of U.S. shelters and contributing more than 15,000 hours of service monthly throughout the world—that's more than 32,000 animals receiving professional portraits each month! [HEARTSSPEAK.ORG](http://HEARTSSPEAK.ORG)