



# TIPS FOR PHOTOGRAPHING **BLACK ANIMALS**

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There's nothing wrong with working what your mama gave you. In fact, HeARTs Speak artist members encourage it of their furry and feathery shelter subjects. Still, despite best efforts, this task can present a challenge for animals of the raven-coated persuasion.

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.

The good news is that 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.

So, the next time you find yourself confronted with a shiny black coat and a pair of glowing eyes, keep these tips in mind — you'll be combating the plight of black pets with each calculated click of your shutter and granting a lifesaving first impression in the process.



## 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.



## FIND THE RIGHT LIGHT

If you're shooting indoors, position your subject with a large window behind you. This will illuminate the details of their facial features; something poorly lit areas will quickly relegate to black blob status.

Choose a room that is flooded with diffused light and is bright, but not in direct sunlight.

Avoid using your on-camera flash. This creates a harsh, yellow-tinged light that won't do that black coat justice.





## 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 transform your black-coated subject into a bright spark.



## SEEK SHADE

Contrary to the popular misconception that black animals are best photographed in direct sunlight, 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. As with the aforementioned indoor window, this will make your subjects eyes sing. And that's a feature you definitely want to accentuate for black animals!



## SHOOTING IN THE STUDIO

If you're studio savvy, think quality over quantity for lighting. 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 black pets quickly fall victim to.



## 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.

