

Old English stories partly derive from Celtic and German legends portray dogs with black coats as ominous and threatening with glowing red eyes. Think the hound of the Baskervilles, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's story involving black dogs that presumably terrorize the Baskervilles, though Sherlock Holmes found the dogs were innocent; or the black rottweilers in the Omen. My family adopted a lovely little black puppy who we call Chemma about a year ago. He and his litter mates had been dumped sick and alone to defend for themselves. Since then, I learned that in our community black dogs are disproportionately taken into shelters and are more often overlooked for adoption in favor of more lighter and brighter fur colors. They're the proverbial black sheep of pet adoption. This is called black dog syndrome, a designation established by the SPCA in the early 2000s. One possible reason for this is that people have been found to fear large black dogs more than they fear large dogs of any other color. They are, of course, no more likely to be aggressive than dogs of other colors. Another plausible reason for black dog syndrome reported by shelters and rescue groups is that black fur dogs may not photograph as well in dimly lit places making them harder to market. In these photographs I've submitted I celebrate the beauty and gentleness of our one-year-old black puppy Chemma. We adore him, his black fur is so soft, and we think it is beautiful.