

Rock jock Maria Milito raises awareness to fight Black Dog Syndrome by adopting black Lab mix

Big black dogs are the last to be adopted from animal shelters and among the first to be euthanized, shelter workers say

BY [AMY SACKS](#) / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

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Maria Milito of Q104.3 FM smooches her newly adopted black Lab mix, Fredo, which she rescued from a kill shelter in Mississippi.

Fredo hardly looked menacing as the handsome black lab mix zipped around Q104.3 jock Maria Milito's living room this week, chasing a stuffed green monkey and stealing her kisses.

But shelter workers say that big black dogs like Fredo are the last to be adopted from animal shelters and among the first to be euthanized.

Known as Black Dog Syndrome, darker-colored dogs are often overlooked by potential adopters because they don't stand out in photographs — or are seen as more intimidating than those of lighter colors.

Not so, says Milito, who recently adopted Fredo, formerly named Bubba, after searching for "black lab mix" on Petfinder.com.

"He's goofy, friendly, and polite," said the classic rock deejay, whose curly black mane matches the color of Fredo's silky coat.

“When I read that he 'found himself in rescue' that kinda tugged at my heart," she said.

The year-old pup had been surrendered to a Mississippi shelter by his elderly owner, then spent long, hot days in a backyard pen waiting for someone to notice him.

Milito found his photo online through [Labs4Rescue](#), a Connecticut-based nonprofit group that rescues dogs, primarily from kill shelters in the South.

“I just kept going to back to him,” she said, but knew her heart wasn't quite ready for a new dog.

The native New Yorker was still reeling over the sudden death of her beloved Boxer-mix Carmine, who died suddenly in April from kidney disease. The 90-pound mutt was only 4 years old.

“I knew I wanted a dog but couldn't stop crying," Milito said. Three months later, she decided to have Fredo transported up from the South. While she hoped to adopt from a local shelter, the strong connection with Fredo had her follow her heart.

Today, the Southern dog is still getting used to New York. It took Fredo two days to know to ring the bell when he needs to go outside.

Now Milito is lending her voice in the hopes that others will overcome the stereotype of black dogs — and cats — that often are associated with witches and ancient superstitions.

“It takes a special someone to overlook the color; their radiant personalities should be what's important,” said Phyllis Taiano, who runs Four Paws Sake Rescue.

Discrimination against black dogs is something that the Queens rescuer knows all too well.

In the last few months, Taiano has found homes for many light-haired Shih Tzu's, maltese, and poodles. Yet Linus, an affable black pit bull mix puppy lingers in foster care. Despite a global outpouring of love and donations that helped pay for his life-saving surgery, no one has stepped up to adopt the healthy year-old dog.

“He is so lovable it makes me cry,” Taiano said.

There are many reasons to love black dogs. [Labs4Rescue.com](#) lists the top 10, among them, “Walking a black lab makes you look 10 lbs. thinner!”

Meanwhile, Milito has her own agenda. She said, “I can finally leave the house without using a lint roller!”

Read more: <http://www.nydailynews.com/life-style/dj-adopts-black-lab-mix-article-1.1188030#ixzz29qUTP0Gn>