

# Advice on dogs, life and love



Dear Dog Lady,

I rescued a dog and was told it was a Lab/Weimaraner mix, Rosco, but he has a blue/black tongue. I am wondering if this can be a characteristic of that breed. Or if he is part chow chow? —Heather

*Heather, your crazy-quilt darling could well have some chow chow mixed in. A startling navy blue/black/purplish tongue is characteristic of that breed. This tongue color is carried by a dominant gene that shows up in nearly all mixed breeds so your Rosco obviously has a chow chow relative or two.*

*Your Rosco is not a “breed” but a mix. Mixed mutts have a stewpot of genes and to question it all too closely can be folly because you’ll never really know for sure, although there is genetic analysis available if you’re willing to pay for it. Orvis (orvis.com) sells a DNA Dog Breed Testing Kit for \$79.98 that includes a cheek swab to take a sample from your dog and a pre-paid mailer to send the swab to a lab (as opposed to a Lab) for testing. In four to six weeks, Orvis promises you’ll receive a “Certificate of Dog Breed Analysis.” The test can identify characteristics of only 38 breeds.*

*Do this investigation if you must, but Dog Lady advises you not to get too hung up on the forebears of shelter or rescue dogs, because there are no true indicators about future health and behavior. Enjoy the way your pet is right now, this moment, today. Be happy you have a blue-tongued wonder of nature.*

Dear Dog Lady,

Our family dog is nearly 14 years old. He lives with me, my husband and my 85-year-old mother (the children are out of the home). He is blind, deaf, very arthritic and thin. He can walk and climb stairs, but with great difficulty. We are giving him Deramaxx for the arthritic pain.

My two adult children say he should be put to sleep, because he has no quality of life and it is cruel to keep him alive. My mother is his primary caregiver and very resistant to putting him away and feels it is murder.

I am caught between my children and my mother. I want to do the right thing and don’t want the dog

to suffer. However, I feel terrible about killing him. Help. —Sally

*Sally, let’s clear one thing off the table immediately: Your adult children have no voice in this. They’re out of the house and only see the situation from afar. Your mother has the most to say about the destiny of the dog because she’s the primary caregiver. Your mom must root for the woofers vicariously. She’s elderly too. She wants the best of life until the end of life. And, right now, she doesn’t want to put the dog down. Listen to your mother.*

*Yes, your dog is old but he can still struggle up the stairs, eat, go outside, smell, and be a comfort to his keeper. If you have any questions about end points, you and your mother should discuss these with the veterinarian who prescribed Deramaxx. Ask about end-of-life issues (Loss of bowels? Refusal to eat?) Make sure mom is included, and allow her the final word about the fate of her dear friend.*

Dear Dog Lady,

I have a Boston terrier. She is five years old and still very, very frisky. I can’t get her to stop jumping on people when they come through the door. Every day when I come home she stands up on the chair and I pet her and talk to her. This doesn’t work for anyone else.

She also is very possessive. She plays well with other dogs but if one is staying at my home (my daughter sometimes leaves her dog with me), and I come home she will actually snap at the other dog so it doesn’t get my attention. This also applies to my daughter when she comes to pick up her dog. She will snap at her dog if my daughter shows her dog attention. Think this is beyond fixing? —Wilma

*Wilma, in the human-dog world, nothing is beyond fixing—provided your dog is fixed, which Dog Lady certainly hopes is the case with your Boston terrier.*

*You have all the power to change the behavior of your dog, as long as you are willing to make no excuses for her. Whenever someone comes to the door, you control the dog by teaching her to sit and stay. This exercise will also work wonders whenever your daughter comes to collect her dog.*

*Now, Wilma, here’s the hardest part: Ignore your Boston bruiser. Pay no mind to her whenever you come home each day. You ramp up her anxiety with the chair and petting routine. Instead, walk into the house, check your mail, change your clothes, fetch a cold drink from the frig. Do anything, but do not indulge her excitement. Your Boston terrier will be confused at first but, with nervous dogs, this is a good confusion. Your pet will key into your new distant demeanor. Only when she is calm should you greet her.*

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