

# Advice on dogs, life and love



## ask dog lady

Dear Dog Lady,

We have an 11-year-old black Lab who has a peculiar habit of burying every toy or bone we give him. We brought him a meaty bone from a great barbeque joint that we thought he'd like to gnaw. The first thing he did was bury it—but only after watching us suspiciously. We don't understand what he's thinking when he does this. Should we stop giving him bones and toys or just give him really cheap ones?

—Janet and Greg

*Janet and Greg, you must understand the power of meaty bones. To a dog, these are the Holy Grail and there's a whole Da Vinci canine code involved in dealing with the priceless objects. Often, this involves burial because your dog's wolf forebears stowed good stuff for later. Your black Lab's instinct is to save and protect.*

*It can be very frustrating dealing with this behavior. When Dog Lady gives her own darling a bully stick—less desirable than a meaty bone but not as messy—he chases around the house whimpering for Dog Lady or Mr. Dog Lady to pursue him. He could play this game for hours. Darling then takes the stick and tries to bury it in the couch cushions, the carpet, the bed pillows, his own bed, or anywhere he can get traction with imaginary dirt.*

*In the moment, meaty bones will make your dog so happy. You could cut back on the pricey toys if you want, but don't give up on those juicy things that bring out the beast in your Lab, even if he drives you crazy. From deep inside, he knows exactly what he is doing. Alas, you humans never will.*

Dear Dog Lady,

I have a friend's dog that has been in my care for three years since it was a puppy. The dog is three years old. I have taken care of the dog completely—food, shelter, vet, grooming, day care—all of his needs. My friend has kept the dog only about three or four times during this period and no longer than two days at a time. What chance do I have of obtaining complete custody of the dog?

—Frances

*Frances, unfortunately, in the strict eyes of the law,*

*pets are still classified as property. If a buyer has the sales slip, he or she is deemed the owner of the pet—same as for a couch, a bicycle, a refrigerator. Conventional wisdom also dictates that possession is 9/10ths of the law. You have invested enough time, money, and sweat equity to lay claim to the dog.*

*Your arrangement with your "friend" sounds unresolved. If you want to make things right, discuss terms. Tell the former owner you would be happy to give visitation rights if he or she surrenders complete custody to you. You could work out terms so everybody feels secure—especially the dog.*

Dear Dog Lady,

Why does my dog kiss (lick) my husband when we tell him to give a kiss but he will not kiss me?

—Chrystal

*Chrystal, your husband is revered as He Who Controls Access To Earthly Delights while you must be She Who Fills The Water Bowl. Your husband is either messier than you (and has crumbs around his mouth for snacking) or he's considered an important candidate for submissive tongue-baths.*

*Just curious: Why do you want kisses from a dog anyway? Long ago, after Dog Lady witnessed where her dog sniffs and licks in a day, she trained darling not to put his nose or tongue near her mouth.*

Dear Dog Lady,

Last year, I rescued a 10 to 12-year-old dachshund. He had his issues and I am working very hard at getting him trained. He is very mild mannered and for the most part gets along well with my two other rescue dogs. I have discovered that he is deaf. He does hear loud sounds, yet everyday chatter goes unheard. I have read online about various ways to teach a deaf dog, however he is a senior and this is a bit more challenging. Any hints would be helpful. I am working on signals for the main commands.

—Terry

*Terry, may heaven rain hot dogs on you and your rescue brood. Providing a responsible home for founding dogs takes a special kind of caring and patience. And, certainly, dealing with an older dog with a disability is really on the side of the angels.*

*So much of the human-canine communication translates into unspoken body language: One look and darling dog responds. Wave an arm and he follows Dog Lady outside. Stand over him, hold up the right hand, and this compels him to sit. Move the hand toward the floor and darling lies down. Hold a flat palm up to his face and he stays. Move the hand in a circle and he snaps out of the stay. There is much you can say with non-verbal cues. Over time, you and your rescue deaf dachsie will develop your own signs of speaking.*

*Communicate at [www.askdoglady.com](http://www.askdoglady.com)*