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## Sunburn Prevention in white pets

Dogs and cats with less pigment and white coats are susceptible to diseases that are exacerbated by exposure to harmful UV sunlight. These are immune mediated diseases, skin cancers, skin inflammation/sunburn and skin infections.

A few examples of pets at higher risk are white breeds like:

- Dalmations
- Bull terriers
- Staffordshire Bull Terriers
- Boxers
- Chinese Hairless
- Crested dogs
- White cats and cats with white noses, ear tips and lower eye lids.

The more your pet is exposed to the sun, the higher the likelihood they will develop these nasty conditions.

During the high UV periods between October – April it is advised to take a few precautions to protect our pigment deprived pets from sunburn.

- 1) Limit sun exposure - the worst times are 9am-3pm. Try to keep your pet indoors during this time. Provide generous shade cover outside in the form of shelters. Avoid reflective surfaces – white floors or tiles reflect more.
- 2) Sunscreens - use a waterproof sunscreen with an SPF 30+ or more, and apply to the hairless skin (nose, ears and belly) 30 minutes before sun exposure. This can be done twice daily. We sell pet sunscreen here at the Animal Medical Centre.
- 3) Exposed portions of skin can be blackened with black ink. Felt tipped markers or stamp pad ink can be used. Be careful NOT to get into the eyes. Permanently tattooing is sometimes considered by vets.
- 4) Body suits can be purchased with high SPF, and are ideal for dogs who like to sunbake. These can be purchased over the internet.

If you are worried about any skin lesions on your pet, be sure to see one of the vets at the Animal Medical Centre, as early diagnosis often results in satisfactory treatment.

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20.1.14