

COOL FOR CATS?

'Summer is a coming in, loud sing cuckoo', wrote an ancient bard with the onset of summer in mind. Hopefully June will herald summer and more sunshine so we can sit outside and soak up the rays. Of course, nowadays, most of us are aware that too much sun is bad for us and can lead to skin problems including skin cancer. Our pets also enjoy the sunshine and are often found sitting in the hottest parts of the garden soaking up the rays.

On a recent sunny day I was in my consulting room looking at the sunshine outside, thinking how nice it must be at the coast, when Snowy, a pure white cat, was brought in to see me. She had developed a crusting of the ear tips and around the bridge of the nose which had started to irritate her and even bleed occasionally. On further questioning, Snowy, I was told, lived for sunshine, and was frequently found lying in the sunniest spot she could find. Unfortunately, cats, just like us, can get too much of a good thing! With too much sunshine they can develop skin problems, and even skin cancer. This is particularly true of white cats or those with white extremities.

Fortunately, just like us, it can be prevented by keeping out of the sun or by applying sun-block to the areas likely to be affected. The factor 50 creams, made for babies, are best in cats, and should be applied regularly to the ear tips and around the nose.

Fortunately biopsies showed that Snowys' condition was still in a pre cancerous stage. She now has regular sun block applied, even on cloudy days, to prevent her problem from deteriorating. If cancer is found then the ears and/ or bridge of the nose have to be removed surgically. This is usually, but not always, successful. So, as ever, prevention is much better than cure! And in Snowys' case she really does need to be cool to be a cat!