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Koala: not a bear

Few things are more iconic than a Koala. Or as former federal tourism minister John Brown said "flea-ridden, piddling, stinking, scratching, rotten little things". That's what makes Australia great.

So why are they not a bear. A bear is a placental mammal, whilst a Koala is a marsupial.

Koalas feed exclusively on eucalyptus. Of the 700 odd eucalyptus species they only feed on about 50, and show a strong preference for only 12 species. Generally they eat the new growth, when available. Due to its low digestibility, and the Koalas low metabolic rate they spend up to 20 hours a day asleep.

During the breeding season (spring) you can hear the female Koalas bellowing their deep yet very loud, throaty roar. Babies are born after 35 days gestation and are about the size of a kidney bean. They then move to the pouch where they attach to the teat for a further 13 weeks. The joey will start venturing out on to mums back at about 7 months of age.

Koalas are one of only two mammalian species that can see UV light.



Cool cats at the movies

Floyd, the cat in *Ghost* could see the dead Patrick Swayze (and slightly surprisingly follow directions to attack the evil Carl). **Garfield** the comic strip hero born in 1978, became a TV celebrity in 1982, and becomes a fully fledged movie star in 2004. **The Pink Panther** was a pioneer of the feline super star, appearing as the animated opening to the 1963 movie of that name. The pink puss then moved on to his own show, remarkably called "the pink panther show": go figure. The MGM lion, the iconic roaring lion is actually called **Leo**. **Simba** of *Lion King* fame was voiced by Mathew Broderick, perhaps more famous for his role in the cult favourite "Ferris Bueller's Day Off". **Snowbell** the feline protagonist from *Stuart Little* (with his mafiosa mate Monty), featured the voice of Michael J Fox. **Chariman Meow** is a shadowy character in *Father Figures* who is never actually seen but oft talked about (in a movie parallel the role of Alex in *The Big Chill* was originally played by Kevin Costner before all scenes featuring his character were cut except the opening credits). **Mr Bigglesworth** of course, from *Austin Powers*, and **Jonesey** from *Aliens* who lived for 57 years cryogenically frozen. *Breakfast at Tiffany's* featured **Cat**, who's real name was **Orangey** who is the only animal to have received two PATSY (Picture Animal Top Star Of The Year) awards. **Elsa the Lioness** is noteworthy in this crowd for being real: being the ward of Joy and George Adamson, and the star of the book and later movie *Born Free* (the latter not featuring the real Elsa who had by then been released to be free). **Cats the Musical**. OK it's actually a stage show but it's got lots of cats in it. Or at least people dressed up as cats. And **Cats of the Aristocats**. **Diego** (*Ice Age*). **Cheshire Cat** (*Alice in Wonderland*). **Tigger** (*Winnie the Pooh*). **King Leonides** (*Bedknobs and Brommsticks*). To name but a few!





Tips to keep your pets coat healthy.

At this time year lots of pets develop skin disease, that may require treatment (if you have one of those dogs see our summer newsletter in december for some very exciting new developments in treatment). However there are some simple things you can do at home to help keep your pets coat in good condition and decrease the risk and severity of skin disease if it occurs.

1. Good year round parasite control. Flea, mites, and ticks can cause skin disease in their own right, and can esacerbate skin problems form other causes. The new generation of parasite control kill all the major fleas, mites, and ticks in a single treatment.

2. Make sure you feed a premium quallity pet food. Dietary deficiencies can cause skin disease. There are also specific foods for treating food allergies, and foods such as Hills derm defence that have high levels of anrtioxidants and fatty acids, to promote healthy skin and increas resitance to skin disease.

3. In animals without skin disease always use a good quality dog shampoo. If your pet has skin disease ask us about the most appropriate medicated shampoos to help manage the disease.

4. Essential fatty acids can improve barrier function in the skin. The most common form of skin disease in dogs and cats is atopy, or reacting to air borne allergens. Air borne allergens are absorbed through the skin, not inhaled. These addtives increase barrier function (glue the skin cells together more effectively) so that less allergens are absorbed through the skin. Adding these suplments in to your pets diet is a bit of a mine field. They are not appropriate for all pets, may cause some problems, and should not be used with some of the diets metnioned previously. However they can be useful so ask us what may be appropriate for your itcyh pet

5. And finally, if you notice your pet is itching, licking, biting, or rubbing, you should arrange a check up with us ASAP. The sooner we settle the itch, the less likely your pet is to cause self trauma and secondary skin infections.