

ASK OUR VETERINARIANS



Dear Dr. Schmidt, Why does my cat Precious have Blue Eyes? Carrie

Dear Carrie,

Now I did it, I only talked about blue eyed dogs last time! OK, here we go. Cats can actually be a little different than dogs when it comes to eye color. First of all, eye color is partially determined by the amount of pigment cells in the eye. The more pigment, the darker the eye color will be. The less pigment, the more blue the eye will be. As in dogs, there are several different reasons Precious may have blue eyes. One of the causes of this is albinism, which is more common in cats than dogs. Believe it or not, breeds like Siamese and Burmese cats have a form of albinism that causes their eyes to be blue. Another is the white spotted gene that, yes, causes white spots of hair on the cat's body. This gene allows for less pigment in the hair, and it can also extend to the eyes causing less pigment there too, thus leaving the color blue to brighten up your life. Now, here is where cats can be a little different than dogs (oops, sorry again cat lovers). But anyway, cats can also carry a dominant gene causing blue-eyed, white-haired cats. The dominant gene actually masks the darker pigment cells, resulting in blue eyes. This same dominant gene can also affect the hair coat causing all white fur. And, it is the same gene that has the potential to interfere with the development of the cat's hearing apparatus, thus rendering the cat deaf. Deafness does not always occur, but is a risk in a certain percentage of white-coated, blue-eyed cats. And, last but not least, there is a rare breed of cat called the Ojos Azules where blue is its natural eye color. Because of all the interbreeding that goes on in the cat world, you can get a pretty good combination of genes, and a variety of eye colors. Hope that evens things out with the dogs.

Here's looking at ya, kid.

Submitted by: Dr. Doug



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