

## Managing Crusty Cats: Bowen's Disease in Feline Patients

Here in Florida, we certainly embrace our sunny environment, but as we all know, that sun exposure creates unique risks, including those to our furry family members. We definitely see an increased risk of certain skin cancers in cats living in our region, and one of the most notable is squamous cell carcinoma in situ, also known as Bowen's disease. Compared to the more common and life-limiting oral form of squamous cell carcinoma, Bowen's disease is an insidious cancer of the skin, with veterinary intervention often sought months or years after skin lesions initially develop. Since this disease occurs most often in anatomic areas that receive maximum solar exposure and with minimal fur coverage, the pinnae, nasal planum, and periocular regions are commonly affected. Bowen's disease lesions are usually multifocal in distribution, with plaque-like lesions of crusting, scabbing, skin erosion, and thickening of the affected skin. "Whitey" was one such cat that presented to us for evaluation of Bowen's disease. He was a semi-outdoor cat who developed multiple, chronic, non-healing lesions around his nose, eyes, and pinnae (see pictures). He was treated, and partially responded, to anti-inflammatory and antibiotic treatments, only to develop new and recurrent sores over time. Punch biopsy and histopathology confirmed the diagnosis of Bowen's disease for Whitey, with disruption of normal dermal maturation and as the term "in situ" suggests, these neoplastic cells were confined to the more superficial layers of the skin, without invasion of the basement membrane. This limits the cancer's access to blood vessels, and therefore minimizes the risk of metastasis with this disease. Without appropriate treatment, however, this superficial cancer can progress to deeper invasive squamous cell carcinoma, so treatment is warranted for any confirmed Bowen's disease lesion.

Treatment for Bowen's disease is highly dependent on the size, location, and extent of lesions. For Whitey, given his multiple lesions in difficult anatomic locations, treatment involved a combination approach. Most of his lesions were managed with use of cryotherapy and strontium brachytherapy, both of which are especially well-suited for treating multiple superficial lesions in cramped anatomic locations (such as the pinnae or periocular regions). These treatments are delivered under brief sedation, and both are both quite effective in treating small (less than 1cm), superficial lesions. These treatments penetrate 3-5mm deep into the skin, with subsequent scabbing and healing of the treated tissue over a two-week period (see Whitey's pictures with expected cryotherapy results). For some cats, especially those with less extensive lesions, surgical excision may be a very effective treatment. For treatment of very extensive or deeper lesions, we often use external beam radiation therapy, which can treat larger regions of tissue. Other reported treatments, including topical imiquimod (Aldara cream), systemic chemotherapy, and oral Palladia (toceranib phosphate), may assist in control of this disease over time, with limited success. An important point of management of Bowen's disease, beyond treatment of active lesions, is owner education. Due to the multifocal nature of this disease, most cats develop new lesions in new locations over time. We advise clients that routine evaluations, with spot treatments every 6-12 months, are usually indicated for best long-term control of this cancer. Overall, the prognosis against Bowen's disease is excellent, with ongoing therapy against active lesions, for new lesions as they develop.



By Jennifer Locke,  
DVM, Diplomate, ACVIM (Oncology)

## What's new: Help us welcome our new Internist, Dr. Deitz to our Jacksonville location!



Dr. Krysta Deitz and  
Triscuit

On December 12th, 2016, Dr. Krysta Deitz joined our team here at Southeast Veterinary Oncology and Internal Medicine. Dr. Deitz is board certified in small animal internal medicine. She received both her BS and DVM degrees from the University of Florida. Dr. Deitz completed an internal medicine residency at Iowa State University, where she also received a Masters degree in Veterinary Clinical Sciences. She obtained board certification in 2008 from the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine.

Dr. Deitz grew up in various parts of the country and animals were always a large part of her childhood (including geese, pigeons, rabbits, and ferrets, as well as dogs and cats). Her grandfather was a human cardiologist and she saw first-hand the science of the medical profession. Veterinary medicine seemed a natural fit; combining her love of animals with the science of medicine.

Dr. Deitz decided to pursue internal medicine during her rotating internship when she saw the challenges it entailed and how much of a difference could be made for patients suffering from chronic disease. Currently Dr. Deitz shares her home with 2 rescued terrier mixes (Maxx and Mortimer) and 3 rescued cats (Triscuit, TidBit, and Atticus Finch).

Dr. Deitz's areas of interest in small animal internal medicine include the role of nutrition in health and disease, endocrine disease, and gastrointestinal disease. Don't hesitate to give Dr. Deitz a call to discuss one of your challenging cases or just to introduce yourself!

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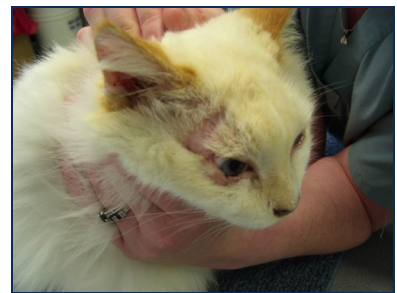
## Whitey—a feline with multifocal Bowen's disease who underwent cryotherapy.



Pre-treatment with cryotherapy



2 weeks post cryotherapy



4 weeks post cryotherapy

Please feel free to contact any of our specialists to discuss cases and treatment options. We are here for you!