



Doggles: Smart dogs' must-have accessory

GOGGLES for dogs? You might laugh, but when you learn how they protect your dog's vision you may wish to take these revolutionary canine sunglasses a little more seriously. Does your dog insist on sticking his head out of the car window as you drive? Does he accompany you to the beach every summer? Do you take him skiing with you? Does he ride on your motorcycle? Equally, does your dog suffer from any eye disorders? Does he have delicate, protruding eyes? Or does he have pale-coloured irises? In any of the above circumstances, your dog should be wearing protective eyewear - especially in a country with such a hot, dusty climate as Greece.

Doggles, which are modelled on sports goggles, have shatterproof, anti-fog lenses which block 100 percent of UV light and keep out wind, dust and debris, while the stylish wrap-around frames (foam-padded for comfort) do not allow any gaps for foreign bodies or stray light. The goggles are kept in place with two adjustable elastic straps, one under the chin, the other behind the ears.

Just in time for summer, Doggles have arrived in Greece, and are exclusively sold at the Optika Skoutari opticians in central Athens. The shop's eye-catching window display, which features toy dogs showing off the range of trendy, high-tech sunglasses, is enough to entice many pet owners who wish to purchase the latest fashion accessory for their beloved pooch. However, optician Tatiana Skoutari explains that - although in France and the UK they have caught on in a big way as the last word in fashion for trend-conscious pooches - it's not just about style.

"Doggles provide vital protection for your dog's eyes," she says. "They are invaluable for all kinds of dogs: to protect hunting dogs from the branches and bushes that could scratch their eyes; for dogs with light-coloured irises like huskies and dogs with pale coats like Maltese terriers, Golden Retrievers, Dalmatians etc; for dogs with protruding eyes like Pekinese; for dogs with eye disorders such as glaucoma or cataracts, for those with sensitive eyes due to diabetes, or for canines which are blind or have had one eye removed."

Just as dogs and cats that live in hot climates are prone to skin cancer (this is particularly true for white animals) and should wear sunblock in the sun, so can long hours in the sun increase the chances of eye disease. Therefore any dog that is spending a substantial amount of time outdoors during the heat of summer - especially at the beach, where there is seldom much shade - should really be wearing eye protection.

Doggles are made in the USA, where they have proved so popular that they are even worn by search and rescue dogs. After the attacks on the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001, the manufacturers of Doggles were asked to supply the canine rescue team with snug-fitting glasses to keep out the potentially harmful soot and dust.

Doggles are available in a variety of sizes to fit all sizes and shapes of dogs. It is recommended to measure your dog's face or to bring him in to the opticians to ensure that a perfectly fitting pair of goggles is purchased - it's no good just guessing, as if there are any gaps the glasses will not provide the full protection. Doggles cost 48 euros for the smallest size, up to 58 euros for the largest.

✓ *Optika Skoutari is at 25-29 Panepistimiou St (in the arcade off Korai St), tel 210-323-5131*

