

A Wonderful World of Knowledge...Know More About It

Episode #11: Giraffe Tongues

Tonight's question is, "Why do giraffes have black tongues?"

As you might expect from an animal with such a long neck, giraffes like to eat leaves from trees, and their favourite leaves come from acacia trees. Acacias have very long, sharp thorns, and the giraffe uses its tongue grab leaves by reaching around those thorns.

This exposes the giraffe's tongue to the Sun hour after hour, day after day.

The black in the giraffe's tongue is caused by a pigment called melanin, the same pigment that darkens human skin.

Melanin serves the same function in the giraffe's tongue as it does in your skin. It blocks much of the Sun's harmful ultraviolet rays and therefore helps prevent sunburn.

If the tongue weren't protected by melanin, those ultraviolet rays could cause cancer, killing the giraffe.

