

Dumb Black-ears

Dying one's fur began as a practical way to adapt to different environments. Hearthsiders often dye their whole coat white, or just their ears, in order to reflect more sunlight. They also may adopt a black mask pattern on their muzzle and around their eyes to prevent glare. In colder climes or on planets far from Focus, thermally absorbent black coats, whether on the whole body or just the ears, are preferred for similar reasons.

Just as Terran clothing tends to grow from practical tool to fashion statement, so too the act of dying one's fur became a means of self-expression. In particular, dying one's ears black grew from a practical way to cope with a colder climate to a fashion statement. It became so popular, in fact, that it became associated with vanity or self-absorption. Over time, vanity became stupidity, and merely dying one's ears black became having black ears at all.

While not common, naturally black ears do exist, usually accompanied by black 'socks' on the front and rear legs. Those with natural black ears became guilty by association. To be sure, black-eared yinrih weren't stigmatized any more than blonde humans are today. Bottle black ears are still quite popular in certain circles. However, those unlucky enough to be burdened with both naturally black ears and a red coat, an exceedingly rare phenotype, were cursed twice over, as they were not only stupid, but also chronically misfortunate.

While First Meeting didn't completely efface the former stigma, adopting black ears, in addition to a red coat with white countershading and a white tail tip, became popular among Terraboos who wanted to affect a vulpine appearance.

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