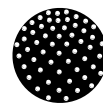
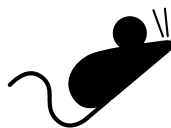


SECOND CHANCE
CENTER FOR ANIMALS



FACTS ABOUT DECLAWING YOUR CAT

There are many myths, misunderstandings, and misinformation concerning declawing. If you are considering having your cat declawed, or if your veterinarian has suggested it, please take a few minutes to learn about this major surgical procedure before you make a decision.

Cats use their claws to maintain proper condition of the nails, for fun and exercise, and to mark territory visually as well as with scent. They stretch their bodies and tone their muscles by digging their claws into something and pulling back. A cat's natural instinct to scratch serves both physical and psychological needs. Before domestication, cats satisfied these needs by clawing tree trunks. House cats can be trained to satisfy their desire to claw without damaging valuable property.

WHY DO PEOPLE DECLAW THEIR CATS?

By far, the most common reason given by cat owners who are considering having their pet declawed is to protect furniture or other property. Some may believe that declawing will prevent the cat from injuring them. Some veterinarians will recommend the procedure to their clients. People may report that they are happy with their cats after declawing, because it makes the cats "better pets." Unfortunately, as many people discover too late, declawing may cause far worse problems than it solves. There are many better ways to treat behavior problems other than radical and irreversible surgery.

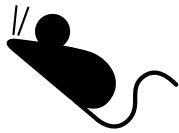
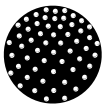
WHAT IS DECLAWING?

Declawing is the amputation of each front toe bone at the first joint (hind foot declaw surgery is not commonly performed). This is equivalent to a person losing the entire tip of every finger at the first knuckle. The cat loses 1/3 of its paws. The surgery is so excruciatingly painful that it is used to test the effectiveness of pain medications. Initial recovery takes a few weeks, but even after the surgical wounds have healed, there are often other long-term physical and psychological effects.

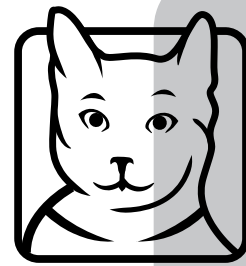
WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL COMPLICATIONS OF DECLAWING?

Pain. While the immediate post-surgical pain that the cats suffer is obviously severe, it is impossible to know how much chronic pain and suffering declawing causes. Cats typically conceal pain or illness until it becomes unbearable. With moderate chronic pain, it may be that they simply learn to live with it. However, a new syndrome of "Chronic Pain of Onychectomy" has been documented to affect many cats, sometimes months or years after declawing.





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FACTS ABOUT DECLAWING YOUR CAT

HOW CAN I STOP UNWANTED SCRATCHING BEHAVIOR WITHOUT DECLAWING?

Despite their reputation for independence, cats can readily be trained to use a scratching post instead of the sofa, curtains, or rugs. Using surgery to prevent or correct a behavioral problem is expedient, but it is not the wisest, kindest, or best solution for your cat. Cats can be trained not to scratch furniture or other objects. Amazingly, many people do not even know that they should provide a scratching post for their cats. Because scratching is a deeply ingrained instinct in cats, if there is no appropriate spot, they will be forced to substitute furniture or other objects. A vertical scratching post should be at least 28-36" high to allow the cat to stretch to his full height. Many cats prefer natural soft wood, such as an aspen log, cedar or redwood plank, or 4x4 posts wound with sisal rope. Some cats prefer a horizontal surface; inexpensive cardboard scratchers are popular with these cats. Rubbing the surface with catnip, or using a catnip spray, may enhance the attractiveness of the post. Other scratching solutions include:

- Training (yes, cats CAN be trained!)
- Regular claw-trimming
- Rotary sanders (Peticure, Drenel)
- Nail caps (SoftPaws, Soft Claws)
- Emery scratching boards (Emerycat)
- Double-sided sticky tape (Sticky Paws)
- Pet repellent sprays
- Non-stick furniture protectors (Corner Savers, Fresh Kitty Furniture Protectors)
- Access restriction (upside-down vinyl rug runner) Remote aversive devices (ScatMat, Ssscat)
- Pheromones (Feliway)
- Furniture covers (blankets, towels-anything loose will not be appealing to your cat!)

IS LASER DECLAWING OKAY?

Laser declawing causes less bleeding and swelling than other techniques. This reduces pain and complications in the first few days after surgery, but the longterm implications of the procedure remain the same.

WHY DID MY VETERINARIAN SUGGEST DECLAWING MY CAT?

Many veterinarians in the U.S. have become accustomed to performing the declawing procedure without thinking about-or recognizing-the consequences. Some even recommend routinely declawing kittens at the same time they are spayed or neutered, whether or not they have developed destructive scratching behavior. However, top veterinary behaviorists and the American Veterinary Medical Association agree that declawing should not be considered as a routine or preventive procedure. Your veterinarian has an obligation to educate you as to the nature of the procedure, the risks of anesthesia and surgery, and the potential for complications and further unwanted behaviors.

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