

WHAT IS DECLAWING?

Declawing, the surgical amputation of a cat's third phalanx (P3) or 'toe bone,' is an elective procedure that's ethically controversial and typically unnecessary. Unlike human nails, cats' claws are attached to the last bone in their toes, and declawing is akin to amputating a person's finger at the last joint of each finger.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR CATS NEEDS

Cats are hardwired to scratch for various reasons, including maintaining claw motion, marking territory, and stretching their bodies. Scratching is not only a normal behavior but also an essential one. It is important to provide alternatives to declawing that allow your cat to express these natural behaviors without causing harm to your furniture.

ALTERNATIVES TO DECLAWING

Cats have a natural need to scratch, and it's important to provide them with alternatives:

- **Scratching Posts/Pads:** Offer your cat a variety of suitable scratchers such as scratching posts, pads with sisal rope or rough fabric, cardboard boxes, and lumber or logs. Experiment with different textures to find your cat's preference. Place scratchers near their sleeping area and consider positioning one in front of an undesirable scratching spot.
- **Regular Claw Trimming:** Prevent injury and damage to household items by trimming your cat's claws regularly. Start this practice when they are kittens to ensure comfort. Always use proper feline nail trimmers and provide positive reinforcement with treats and petting.
- **Temporary Synthetic Nail Caps:** Glue-on nail caps can protect against human injury and home damage. These may need replacement every 4-6 weeks, making them an alternative to regular nail trimming.

- **Synthetic Feline Pheromone Sprays/Diffusers:** Cats may scratch due to stress or anxiety. Synthetic feline pheromone diffusers like Feliway can alleviate stress and anxiety. Keeping these diffusers in the cats most frequented areas of the home help to maintain a sense of comfort and safety.

CARING FOR YOUR CAT

Cats require more than just alternatives to declawing. Here are some additional tips to ensure your cat's well-being:

- **Appropriate Environmental Enrichment:** Ensure your cat's environment is enriching and meets their natural needs. Offer a variety of toys, climbing structures, and cozy spots for them to relax.
- **Positive Reinforcement:** Cats respond well to positive reinforcement. Reward good behavior with treats and affection, and avoid punishing them for unwanted behavior.
- **Regular Veterinary Check-ups:** Regular veterinary visits are crucial for maintaining your cat's health. Discuss your cat's scratching habits with your veterinarian for additional guidance.
- **Training:** Training your cat to use scratchers is a gradual process. Be patient, use treats as rewards, and redirect them to appropriate scratching surfaces.

POTENTIAL SIDE EFFECTS

Declawing your cat includes some potential life-long consequences

- **Increased risk for osteoarthritis:** By altering the skeletal structure(16+ bones are removed with total declaw!), the body must move and bear weight in an abnormal manner. This can lead to inflammation and remodeling of the joints and remaining boney structures, causing pain and discomfort that is difficult to control.

- **Increased risk for behavioral issues:** Eliminating the ability to perform evolutionary behaviors associated with scratching can increase the incidence of anxiety, which can lead to further behavioral issues such as inappropriate urination habits.
- **Increased risk for biting:** Cats use their claws to communicate when they would like to be left alone, or do not like what is happening. If they are unable to swat effectively, they are more likely to bite to communicate their emotions.
- **Increased risk of predation:** When outdoors, cats use their claws both for defense and to escape predators by climbing out of their reach. Like other cats, declawed cats should be kept exclusively indoors for their safety.

You play an essential role in your cat's healthcare. By understanding and implementing alternatives to declawing and providing a stimulating and enriching environment, you can ensure the well-being of your feline companion while preserving your furniture.

For more information on declawing, declawing alternatives, and claw trimming, visit:

www.catvets.com/declawalternatives



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