



~ The Truth about Declawing Cats ~

Declawing is an elective surgery cat owners sometimes choose to have done to prevent their pet from scratching furniture, curtains, other pets, and people. Declawing is a controversial procedure. Some people feel it is inhumane. Many veterinarians will always counsel the pet owners in alternatives to declaw surgery, while other veterinarians simply won't do the surgery except in cases of medical necessity.



A cat's remarkable grace, agility, and sense of balance are in part due to its claws, which allow it to establish footing for walking, running, springing, climbing or stretching. A cat's claws are also its best defense in the outdoors. I strongly disagree with the practice of declawing, but you can make up your own mind after you read the real truth about declawing cats below.

What Declawing really is...

The standard declawing procedure calls for the removal of the claw including the germinal (epithelium) cells responsible for its growth, and part or all of the third phalanx (terminal bone) of the toe. The operation is usually performed on the front feet, and is actually an amputation comparable to the removal of human fingertips at the first knuckle. The cat experiences pain in the recovery and healing process.

Declawing can be done at any age, but younger cats tend to bounce back more quickly than older ones. It is never recommended to take out a cat's back claws. Cats rarely damage anything with their rear claws and their rear claws are their only defense after the front ones are removed.

What are the Risks involved in Declawing...



The procedure is not without risk. The tourniquet, used to reduce blood loss during the surgical procedure, can damage the radial nerve and result in paralysis of the leg. This paralysis is usually temporary but can be permanent. If the incisions come open and expose the remaining bones of the digits, infection can occur and the wounds must be left open to heal, which can take longer than if sutures were holding the wound closed.

If the declawing procedure is not done correctly, misshapen claws can grow back. An incorrectly positioned cut during declawing surgery can remove too much of

the toe, taking with it part or all of the toe's pad. In addition, if a bone fragment is left at the surgery site, it may become a source of infection. Both claw regrowth and infection necessitate additional surgery.

Declawing your cat is a decision that should never be taken lightly and certainly never be done for the owner's convenience.

Why Cats Scratch...

Scratching is a natural behavior for cats and a way of fulfilling a cat's strong instinctive need to mark its territory. Not only do cats mark objects visibly by scratching them, but the scratching deposits secretions from glands in the feet that can be smelled by other cats. Scratching can also provide valuable stretching and foot exercise for your cat.

Alternatives to Declawing...

There is a simple alternative available for you and your cat. Introduce a scratching post. You can make one yourself or it can be purchased. Your cat's scratching post should be tall enough so your cat can stretch completely when scratching, and stable enough so it won't wobble when being used. It should be covered with a strong, heavy, rough fiber like the back side of carpeting and lined with catnip.



Make the post a fun place to be by placing toys on or around it, or by rubbing it with catnip, and put it in an accessible area. If you're trying to discourage your cat from scratching a particular piece of furniture, try placing the post in front of it, gradually moving the post aside as your cat begins to use it regularly.

A quick squirt from a water bottle will let your cat know when it has made a wrong choice between your furniture and the scratching post. Training your cat to use its post helps increase the bond between the cat and owner by increasing communication.

Clipping the nails every week or two keeps nails short and less able to do damage. With the owner's patience and training, most cats will allow nail trimming.

If possible, get your kitten used to having its feet handled and nails clipped while young. Let your veterinarian show you how to trim your cat's nails. The only equipment necessary is a good pair of nail clippers. Don't forget to praise your cat while you clip the nails, and reward him with a treat.