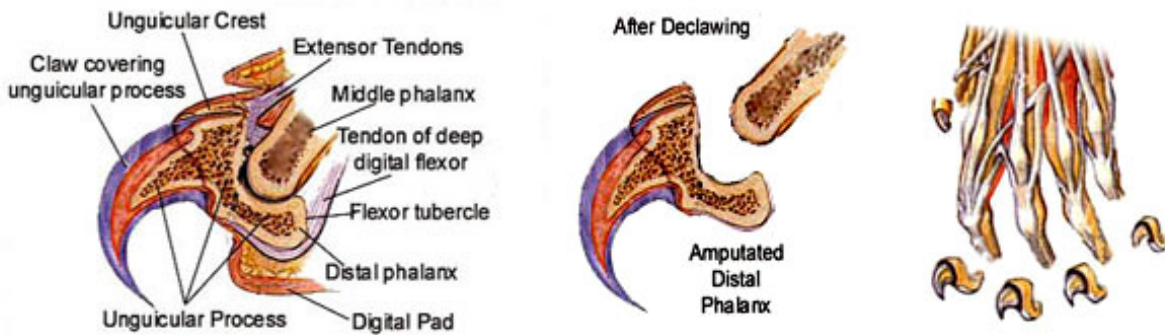


What is Declawing?

The term “declaw” is actually inaccurate as it implies declaw surgery *only* involves the removal of a cat's claws. In reality, declawing (or onychectomy) is the complete amputation of the last digital bone, including the nail bed and claw, on the front of each toe. (see diagram)



Adapted from: Atlas of Feline Anatomy for Veterinarians; Hudson/Hamilton, W.B. Saunders Company

Declawing is a painful procedure as cats are digitigrade, meaning they walk on their toes. A cat's claws are used for balance, for exercising, and for stretching the muscles in their legs, back, shoulders, and paws.

Declawing can have permanent negative effects. According to research published in the Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery, declawing increases the risk of long-term/persistent pain, which can manifest as inappropriate elimination (soiling/urinating outside of the litter box) and aggressive behavior/biting. Both the American Association of Feline Practitioners and the American Veterinary Medical Association promote training to use the scratching post and discourage declawing as a surgical procedure. You can read their position statements on their websites.

catvets.com/guidelines/position-statements/declawing

www.avma.org/resources-tools/avma-policies/declawing-domestic-cats

Alternatives to Declawing

Scratching is a completely normal and healthy behavior for cats and it serves many purposes. Cats scratch to stretch their muscles, shed old cuticle, sharpen their claws, and leave scent marks.

Provide Appropriate Scratching Items

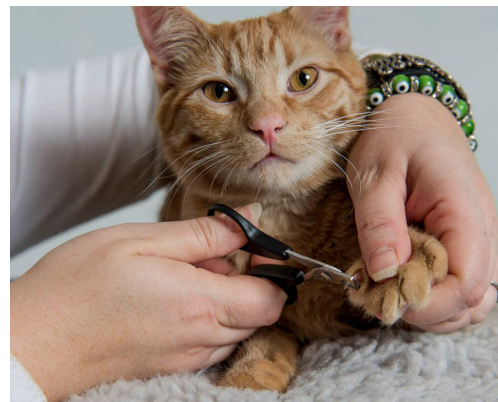
Provide your cat with suitable 'scratchers' where they can exhibit normal scratching behavior. It is important to experiment with a variety of textures and types of scratchers to determine your cat's preference. Offer stable scratching posts/boards around your home in different materials like carpet, sisal, wood, and cardboard, as well as different styles (vertical and horizontal).

Cats that scratch chair legs or corners of your couch may prefer a vertical or upright scratching post. Make sure vertical posts are tall enough so that your cat can stand up and stretch to scratch. Cats that scratch rugs and carpets may prefer a horizontal or flat scratching post/mat.

The placement of scratchers is very important! Cats often stretch/scratch when they wake up; consider placing one near where your cat sleeps. It can also be effective to place a scratcher near a cat's preferred (yet undesirable) scratching object (e.g. corner of the couch).

Routine Nail Trims

Regularly trimming your cat's claws can prevent injury and damage to household items. Proper feline nail trimmers should be used to prevent splintering of the claws. If possible, start trimming as kittens so they become comfortable with the process early on. Before trimming your cat's claws, accustom her to having her paws handled and squeezed. You can do this by gently petting her legs and paws while giving her a treat. This will help to make it a more pleasant experience. Always trim nails in a calm environment and provide lots of positive reinforcement! If your cat does not tolerate nail trims at first, start slow, take breaks, and make it a familiar routine. Ask your veterinarian for advice and a demonstration on trimming your cat's claws.



Temporary Nail Caps

These caps are glued over your cat's nails to help prevent human injury and damage to household items. The nail caps usually need to be re-applied every 4-6 weeks; therefore they may be a less desirable alternative to regular nail trimming and suitable scratchers. These nail caps can be difficult for owners to apply and may need to be done by your veterinarian.

Pheromones

Feline Interdigital Semiochemical

When a cat marks an area by scratching, their toes and foot pads release the feline interdigital semiochemical (F.I.S). All cats need to scratch. Scratching helps them mark their territory. This leaves both visual scratch marks and pheromone markers. It also helps them to feel secure in their surroundings. And scratching feels good to your cat! The F.I.S pheromone encourages your cat to scratch. This can make it difficult to move your cat's scratching place, especially if they've chosen to use your couch. [FELISCRATCH](#) by Feliway® mimics the natural FIS pheromone. When combined with the other ingredients in FELISCRATCH, a blue colorant and catnip, it will entice cats to scratch on the scratching post.

Feline Facial Pheromone

Continued scratching by cats may be related to stress, anxiety, attention seeking, or a perceived lack of security in their environment. Anxiety can also be intensified by punishment, thus driving the cat to increase scratching behaviors. The feline facial pheromone is a comforting pheromone. It provides a sense of reassurance for cats in their environment. These 'happy messages' help cats feel safe and secure. [Feliway® Classic](#) Diffuser and Spray both mimic the natural feline facial pheromone. It reduces stress and stress-related behaviors.

Applying Feliway® spray on the objects in your home where your cat has exhibited undesired scratching can prevent your cat's need to mark these areas again. If undesirable scratching occurs in several rooms, indicating a more generalized anxiety/stress, it is recommended to also utilize Feliway® diffusers to help comfort your cat in their home environment.

Appropriate Environmental Enrichment

Providing your cat with an environment that is enriching is vital to teaching your cat to scratch on appropriate objects. Destructive scratching can occur in cats because their needs have not been fully met. Cats need the proper resources to perform their natural behaviors and have control over their social interactions. You can enhance your cat's health and well-being by ensuring all their needs are met in the home!



You can live harmoniously alongside your cat with claws and still maintain nice furniture by understanding a bit more about your cat's natural behaviors, and enriching your home with items your cat can scratch!