

Declawing 101

Why do cats scratch?

- Communication – leave their scent and visible mark
- Psychological comfort and natural instinct – i.e. kneading for milk
- Fully stretch back and legs
- Safety – climb to secure vantage point, protect from threats

“If performed on a human being, declawing would be like cutting off each finger at the last knuckle.”

-Jean Hofve, DVM

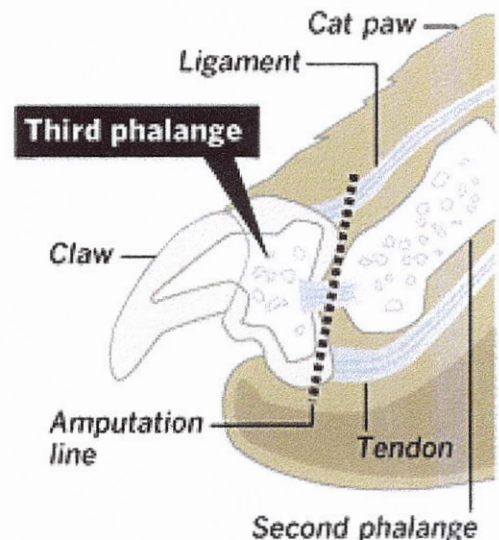
What is declawing?

- Amputation of front toe at first joint via scalpel, clipper, or laser
- Severs tendons, nerves, and blood vessels
- Declawing is illegal or considered extremely inhumane in 25 countries around the world

Complications of declawing

(More than 30% of cats develop serious behavior problems)

- **Abscesses**, claw regrowth
- **Severe pain** – each toe is amputated, may experience phantom pain
- **Joint stiffness, arthritis** – toe joint tendons “frozen” in contracted position
- **Biting & personality changes**– declawed cats have lost their first line of defense and are more likely to bite when scared, startled, or threatened. Cats may become fearful, reclusive, and unfriendly
- **Litterbox problems** – new, irritating sensation on feet
- **Vulnerability** – if the cat accidentally gets loose outside, it has lost its primary way to defend itself from predators
- **Death** – there is a small but real risk of death from anesthesia, bleeding, or other surgical complications



Alternatives to declawing

- Train cat to use a scratching post
- Keep nails trimmed
- Provide several different acceptable, firmly anchored scratching surfaces
 - Vertical post 28-36" high
 - Scratching mats
 - Horizontal cardboard scratchers
- Clear sticky to tape/other deterrents for furniture (i.e. Sticky Paws)
- Plastic caps for claws (i.e. “Soft Paws”)

“CFA perceives the declawing of cats (onychectomy and the severing of digital tendons (tendonectomy) to be elective surgical procedures that are without benefit to the cat. Because of the discomfort associated with any surgery and potential future behavioral or physical effects, CFA disapproves of routine declawing or tendonectomy surgery in lieu of alternative solutions to prevent household damage.”

-CFA Official Statement on Declawing