

# DECLAW...OR NOT?

## Important things to consider when making the decision

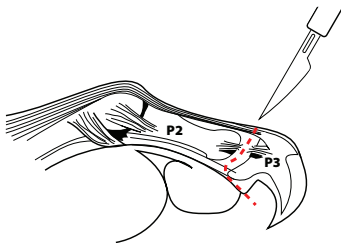
**Scratching is a normal behavior of cats** It conditions the claws, serves as a visual and scent territorial marker, allows the cat to defend itself, and provides healthy muscle engagement through stretching. In many cases, a cat can be trained to scratch only appropriate surfaces. However, a cat's excessive or inappropriate scratching behavior can become destructive or cause injury to people in the home.

### Alternative training and management options

- Providing appropriate scratching surfaces, such as dedicated posts and boards that are tall enough to encourage full stretching. What constitutes an attractive surface or location varies by cat, so don't be afraid to get creative! Scenting with catnip may help too.
- Frequent nail trims - every 1-2 weeks
- Nail caps - replaced every 4-6 weeks
- Positive reinforcement training, beginning with kitten kindergarten if available
- Pheromone sprays and/or plug-ins
- Discourage use of inappropriate surfaces by attaching sticky tape or tinfoil
- Punishment is not an effective deterrent



**When the alternatives aren't enough** When undesirable scratching is not able to be successfully managed, or a member of the household is immunocompromised with a higher risk of health complications as a result of accidental scratches, declawing may be the only alternative to relinquishment or euthanasia. While not a first choice, nor a minor procedure, if properly performed declawing may allow a pet cat to remain in an otherwise good home.



Declawing is the surgical amputation of a cat's claws and the third toe bones to which they are attached. Most cats will still exhibit scratching behavior after declawing. If performed, this elective orthopedic surgery requires general anesthesia and comprehensive pain management under the care of an experienced veterinarian. Like any major surgical procedure, possible complications include short- and long-term pain, bleeding, infection, and wound reopening.

**Make a thoughtful choice** Because elective declawing is performed for the benefit of the owner rather than the cat, the procedure remains controversial. The decision to have a cat declawed should be carefully considered in consultation with your veterinarian. Declawing should only be performed after reasonable behavior modification attempts and alternatives have been exhausted. Declawed cats should not be allowed outdoors, unless they are under direct supervision.



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