

Declawing

Scratching is normal cat behavior. It is how cats mark their territory both visually and by leaving their scent behind. Scratching is also used to keep their claws conditioned, “husk” removal, and as a stretching activity.

Declawing of house cats should only be considered after attempts have been made to prevent the cat from using its claws destructively or when there is a risk of the owner’s health and wellness due to suppression of immune system.

Declawing is an elective surgery and it is considered a “cosmetic” surgery. It is major surgery. The nail is part of a small bone at the end of the toes. To declaw, the bone is removed at the joint. The skin is then reapposed with either sutures or sterile surgical glue and heavy bandages are placed over the feet and forelegs for 24 hours. The cats stay in the hospital an additional 24 hours to watch for bleeding and complications.

After your cat comes home, you may see limping or holding up of one or both paws. This is fairly normal for the first day or two even with the pain medications, but if it continues, this may be a sign of a complication. Please call us.

The older or heavier the cat is at time of declaw, the worse the complications are. If you think your cat will be best off being declawed, it is best to have it done at 12 to 16 weeks of age.

A declawed cat should never be allowed to go outside. Without their natural protection, they would be at risk for harm from other animals, etc.

There are alternatives to declawing: There is a product called Soft Paws. It is like a fake fingernail placed over the cats nail. It will fall off as the nail grows, usually about 4 to 6 weeks. You would then replace them. Training your cat where to scratch is also possible. This takes some patience, but is the easiest alternative. To deter cats from scratching on certain areas, the use of double sided sticky tape or the prickly side of a carpet runner will keep cats off your good furniture.

Please don’t hesitate to ask us if you are still not certain about declawing.