



The Truth About Declawing

DECLAWING (Onychectomy)

If you are considering having this surgery done on your own cat, or if your veterinarian has suggested it, please take a few minutes to learn what declawing really is and what it does to your cat before you go ahead with it.

If you are a rescuer who believes that is better to have an adopter declaw a cat than for the cat not to have a home at all, then please take a few minutes to read this article.

What veterinarians don't tell you about declawing surgery you will learn here. This practice is so brutal and inhumane that it has been banned in Europe and we cannot wait for the day that it is banned here in North America.

Why do cats scratch?

Numerous reasons: To relieve stress, affirm territory, exercise muscles, to show affection, to catch prey, to climb, to balance and to defend themselves.

What is declawing?

Declawing is NOT just the removal of the claws. It is truly a very painful & inhumane AMPUTATION that no human who claims to love an animal should even consider doing to their pet.

When a cat is declawed the last bone of each of the ten front toes of the paws are removed, along with tendons, ligaments, muscles, nerves, and everything in between. Hind foot declaw or back paw declaw surgery is not commonly performed on house cats, but is a common practice in wild cats such as lions, etc.

Methods of declawing

Declawing a cat usually is done in one of two ways: the excisional method or the guillotine (clipper) method. The excisional method removes the entire bone (P3), and is most commonly done using a scalpel blade or laser. There's no real difference; the scalpel cuts the skin and the laser burns the skin, which is even more painful. The guillotine method uses a nail clipper that severs the P3 bone in half, removing the claw and distal (end) part of this bone, sometimes cutting through the toe pad as well.

A third technique, called a Deep Digital Flexor Tendonectomy, is not technically a declaw, but a surgical procedure where the tendons that operate the claw are cut, leaving the claw intact. This is to prevent active use of the claws. This procedure leaves the cat with no control over his/her claws so nails must always be trimmed to ensure that they do not grow into the paw pads. Again it is NOT just the removal of the claw we are talking about here, it is serious surgery where the cat undergoes an amputation causing severe pain during and after surgery.

What is involved in the surgery

The cat is first put under general anesthesia. A tourniquet is placed around the first paw to be declawed. Then the vet performs a series of ten *amputations*, each of which removes the claw and the bone into which it is firmly rooted. Then, because the supporting tendons & ligaments for each claw are no longer needed they are chopped off as well, along with the surrounding soft tissue. Flesh is also removed and thrown in the trash. The cat's paws are then firmly bandaged so the cat doesn't bleed to death.

Below are links to videos of actual declawing surgeries involving different methods of declawing. This is exactly what is done to your cat.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=niMgBGfMgFc>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aib-66bcFdM&NR=1>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJ5QPTqy19Y&NR=1>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmZtegow8bl&NR=1>

Photographs are also below:

<http://community-2.webtv.net/stopdeclaw/declawpics/>

After you view these you will be horrified and disgusted about what some vets do not tell you, just because they are running a business and they need to make money!!!

Post surgery complications:

- Studies show that half of declawed cats suffer physical complications such as damage to radial nerves, excruciating pain, hemorrhage, or very painful regrowth of a deformed claw inside of the paw.
- Approximately 33% of cat that are declawed suffer behavioral complications post surgery and sometime years after the surgery has been performed.
- Declaw surgery is so painful that it is used sometimes to test the effectiveness of pain medications.
- Initial recovery takes a few weeks, but even after the surgical wounds have healed, there are often other long-term physical complications and negative psychological effects.

Typically, cats undergoing onychectomy (declawing) are NOT given any pain medication or are only given a single dose of analgesic before or after surgery. So there is no doubt that the pain is great, but because cats are so great at masking pain and disease, often owners and even vets do not realize they are in pain.

Pet owners who have had cats declawed without knowing what was involved often tell me that neither the procedure itself, the complications, nor the non-surgical alternatives were ever explained to them by their veterinarian. They are absolutely mortified at what they have done to their beloved animal.

Behavior and physical problems post declawing

Many behavior problems may develop after a cat is declawed.

- Since the cat's primary defense no longer exists, the animal has to find another way to defend itself, most often by biting. It is proven that many declawed cats turn into biters.
- Some cats tend to destroy furniture more so after the surgery.
- Many stop using the litter box because it is too painful on their paws, after the trauma and painful surgery. Therefore they start eliminating in soft places; usually the couch, the bed, etc.

- **The pain of declawing sometimes is so bad and traumatic that it causes cats to be reluctant to play, or even walk. Owners sometimes neglect them, even mistreat them, because of this.**

Declawed cats are deprived of the means to defend themselves. You may say, "My cats never go outdoors. They are not in any danger!" But accidents do happen and should your cat get out somehow, the dangers are enormous. To begin with since the cat no longer has claws, he or she cannot even climb a tree to get away from predators.

Pet owners may ultimately end up re-homing their cats or turning them into shelters shortly after surgery because of the above mentioned behavior problems. Of course, when these cats are turned into shelters their chances of getting out alive are less than slim because of their behavior problems. Nobody will adopt a cat that pees all over the furniture, nobody will adopt a cat that will bite. I can honestly count with my fingers the people willing to take in a cat that has elimination issues. (Yes, they are out there but aren't many and they are not people; they are called ANGELS!) Is this fair for these animals when they really are not at fault? After all, they didn't choose to be declawed!

Pet owners must understand that taking the easy way out when there is a problem with the pet is not the way to go! Pet owners need to learn to question their vet on everything and anything that your vet will want to do to your pet. If your vet will not take the time to explain a procedure, the potential complications and the alternatives to you, then my suggestion is for you to find a vet who will.

Facts

FACT: as an animal rescuer I see a whole lot more declawed cats being re-homed or taken to shelters than my vet sees in his practice.

FACT: In all my years of rescue I have probably received 3 calls from owners who want to re-home their cat because of their furniture being scratched. But I do get hundreds of calls from people wanting to re-home their declaw cat because of behavior problems.

FACT: Even though it is part of being a cat to use its claws, they do not use their claws on everything and when they use them inappropriately, there are many products on the market these days that can help re-direct and train the cat to use their claws where they are supposed to.

FACT: If you do not have the patience and the time to train a pet and teach them manners then, sorry to say, you shouldn't have a pet at all. Pets are for life. They are part of your family and they deserve to be treated as part of the family. They need to be treated with love. A great deal of patience and understanding is required to be a pet owner.

FACT: Animals have feelings but have no voice. They cannot understand why they woke up in pain after such an invasive surgery and they certainly cannot tell you in how much pain they feel. It is your job as a pet owner to educate yourself and to protect your pet.

Alternatives to declawing

There many products on the market today to help protect your furniture and to keep cats from scratching where they do not suppose to.

Scratching posts:

Before you purchase any scratching post you need to determine what type of scratcher your cat is. Some cats are horizontal scratchers, some are vertical and some are both. Once you purchase the right scratcher for your cat, next is to train your cat how to use it. This can be done easily with a little of catnip sprayed or sprinkled on the scratcher depending on the catnip type you have purchased.

Outdoor sisal or jute rugs work wonders and cats love them, it is like a magnet for them to scratch.

If your cat persists in scratching the furniture then purchase a water gun. Squirt your cat with water and re-direct him or her to the scratching post every time he or she scratches elsewhere.

Soft Paws

There is an awesome product on the market today called Soft Paws that can be purchased at any pet store. Basically, Soft Paws are plastic nail caps that are glued on to your cat's nails after his or her nails are trimmed. They last approximately 4 months and then it's time to re-apply. It is certainly much more humane than a declawing and a lot less expensive! Here is a video on how to apply them.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gh9ZsOUL79I>

Furniture covers

An old comforter or slipcovers work wonderfully in discouraging the cat from attacking your sofa.

Furniture protectors

If your cat loves to scratch the arms of the sofa, you can buy furniture protectors at many pet stores. They are clear hard plastic and they tuck nicely in your sofa or chair. You cannot even see that they are there.

Sticky Paws

This is basically double sided tape strips that your cat will not be too happy about scratching. You must read the directions, however, as they are not appropriate for all materials.

Things to assist with re-directing and correcting bad behavior:

A can full of pennies, a water gun, a firm tone of voice, or time-out for a few minutes. Always reprimand in a loving, humane manner, just as you would your children.

* * *

Most people are horrified after they have been educated about this painful and inhumane procedure.

They cannot believe what they have done in the past to prior pets or what they are about to do.

If after reading these articles, seeing the pictures and watching the videos above, you plan to go forward with the surgery, then you are hopeless and my only suggestion to you is to least look for a cat that has been already mutilated by a prior owner. Lord knows there are plenty of them at shelters.

For the rest of you who understand the truth now about this terrible and abhorrent practice, I applaud your decision NOT to declaw and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for being a loving and caring cat owner.

Here are a few links with further and excellent information about declawing written by veterinarians and professionals that I encourage you to read.

<http://www.declawing.com/htmls/declawing.htm>
<http://www.theanimalspirit.com/declaw.html>
http://goodcatswearblack.com/declawing/about_declawing.htm
<http://www.declawing.com/>
<http://www.pawproject.com/html/faqs.asp>
<http://www.catsinternational.org/contact/index.html>
<http://declaw.lisaviolet.com/>

Thank you for saving a paw!

**Celene Albano
HPR Rescue CEO**

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October 2009