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Declawing Demystified

The debate rages on in a lot of different circles. Should you declaw your cat? Is it inhuman? Or should it be a natural course both for the health and happiness of the pet...and the pet's owners?

Cat claws can be very destructive to draperies, carpeting, and furniture in your house. Perhaps your kitty is scratching you every time he/she is picked up. It makes us all upset when our pets do things around the house we do not like. However, it is also difficult to be mad when the cat is only doing "what comes naturally."

Perhaps you have heard others say that it is cruel, inhumane, or that once done the cat becomes defenseless. Maybe you have even tried the plastic "nail caps" but have been frustrated with them coming off or needing frequent replacement. Did you buy a nice scratching post only to have a cat refuse to use it?

When cats are made to live with us in our homes, this is somewhat of an unnatural environment for them. However consider that it is a known fact that cats living totally indoors will live at least 2-3 times longer than an outside cat because of dogs, cat fights, cars, disease, & abusive people. Therefore it makes good sense to help your cat live the best life possible by keeping it inside your house and making it an acceptable member of your family. This may include declawing it to prevent damage to the home and those living in it.

Declawing is not cruel, in our opinion, as long as it is done properly and managed well after the surgery. It is much more cruel to get mad at the cat for following its natural instincts.

Declawed cats are not defenseless. Cats do not fight with their front claws. They bite and scratch with the rear feet. They can still climb trees (to escape) without front claws.

No cat is too old to be declawed. However, the younger the cat is when surgery is performed, the faster the recovery. 8-16 week old kittens are often running all over the house the very next day after surgery.

The rear feet can also be declawed but is only recommended if your cat damages you or the furniture with the back feet.

WHAT IS INVOLVED?

The surgery is done under general anesthesia. The last joint of the toe that contains the claw is surgically removed. The surgical incisions are closed either with sutures or a surgical adhesive. The feet are sore for 1-2 weeks but excessive post-operative pain is rare except in older, overweight cats. Additional long-lasting pain injections or oral medications are recommended when appropriate. Special litter recommendations are made to ensure that nothing sticks to the feet to cause an infection. Otherwise no special home care is required.

Declawing is probably the single most important surgical procedure for your kitten, other than spay/neutering that will help ensure a satisfactory relationship between the cat and its owner!



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