

Declawing

Declawing is not only a painful procedure for a cat, but actually removes a needed body part for movement and defense. The standard way to declaw a cat is to remove not only the claw, but the cells at the base of the claw and part or all of the terminal bone of the toe. Consider it as an amputation of part of the cats body or, think of it as removing the last part of your finger all the way up to the joint closest to your fingernail.

Declawing is not only a painful procedure, it can also have long-lasting effects on cats. Once their claws have been removed, cats can no longer perform their natural stretching and kneading rituals. They become weaker as they age and may experience debilitating arthritis in their backs and shoulders.

Most importantly, cats without claws have lost their first line of defense. Less able to protect themselves, they cannot fight off other animals or escape quickly from dangerous situation; therefore, a declawed cat must always remain indoors. They may also become biters because they no longer can use their claws as a warning. Oftentimes, they become nervous, irritable and difficult to handle.

Finally, declawed cats can often stop using their litterboxes. Some apparently associate the pain they feel in their paws after surgery with trying to cover their waste with litter. Therefore, they may seek a less painful place to eliminate, such as the carpet or bathtub.

A better alternative to declawing is purchasing a sturdy scratching post (generously sprinkle catnip leaves onto the post to entice the cat) or trimming the cats nails regularly. Plastic nail clips, otherwise known as Soft Paws, offer yet another alternative. For more information about declawing and its alternatives, call the Behavioral Help line at Santa Clara Humane Society, 408-727-3383 x753.