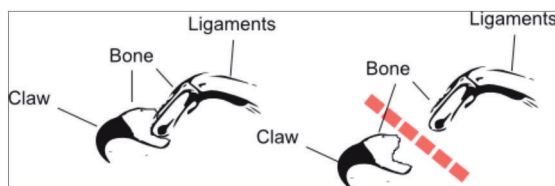


THE DANGERS OF DECLAWING CATS

Declawing is banned in 22 countries as a form of animal abuse. In 2017, the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association (OVMA) issued their position that it “opposes elective and non-therapeutic Partial Digital Amputation (PDA), commonly known as declawing.” In 2017, Nova Scotia became the first Canadian province to officially ban the practice. It is also banned in British Columbia, PEI and Newfoundland & Labrador.

What is Declawing?

Declawing, or “onychectomy,” is an amputation of the end bones (distal phalanx) of cat’s toes. It is a major surgery. This is the equivalent of a human losing the top of each finger at the first knuckle.



The Risks of Declawing

Unlike most animals that walk on the soles of their paws, cats walk on their toes. This means declawed cats often have trouble walking or exercising properly because they have lost bones, tendons, and ligaments in their feet. Recovery from declawing can be painful for cats — some cats never walk properly again, develop arthritis or bad posture, and declawed cats are three times more likely to be diagnosed with back pain. Declawing also results in emotional and psychological effects as they develop negative behaviours. For humans, that means you may be exchanging one negative behaviour — scratching furniture — for others. Research¹ has shown that declawed cats are:

- Seven times more likely to eliminate waste outside the litter box
- Four times more likely to bite
- Three times more likely to be aggressive
- Three times more likely to overgroom

¹ Nicole K Martell-Moran, Mauricio Solano, Hugh GG Townsend. Pain and adverse behavior in declawed cats. Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery, 2017.

Action Volunteers for Animals (AVA) is an all-volunteer-run charitable animal rescue dedicated to helping stray and feral animals live healthy and happy lives.

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Leaving Their Mark Cats & Scratching



The information provided here is designed to help you prepare and welcome your new feline companion into your home and life

Scratching is a natural, healthy, and necessary activity for all cats. By understanding why your cat or kitten needs to scratch, and encouraging healthy and appropriate scratching habits, you can have a cat and a nice couch too!

WHY CATS SCRATCH

Cats use their claws for a variety of reasons:

- To defend themselves
- To climb, exercise, and stretch. Stretching is essential for cats to maintain healthy back, chest, and leg muscles and to help keep their spine and hips properly aligned
- To mark territory with their scent
- For emotional release when they feel stressed or excited

Cats tend to scratch in social areas and places where your scent is the strongest – like your couch or your bed – because they are trying to mingle their scent with yours. Consider it a kitty compliment!

PROMOTE GOOD SCRATCHING HABITS

Here are a few tips to help your cat develop healthy scratching habits:

- Provide a good quality scratching post; a tall, sturdy, vertical one is best. You can train your cat to use it by, for example, having it chase a toy up the post. Some scratchers come with catnip to rub on the post as an incentive. A sturdy horizontal scratcher is a good alternative for cats that prefer to scratch carpet or other flat surfaces.
- Put the post beside any piece of furniture that your cat seems to like to scratch, and gently nudge them to the post when they get the urge to scratch.
- Cover any area or piece of furniture that your cat has chosen to scratch with a deterrent, such as double-sided tape. Once cats realize they don't like the texture and they have a better alternative, they typically stop scratching that area.
- Keep multiple scratchers around the house, placing them in your cat's favourite spots.

Never punish a cat for scratching furniture. Instead, use positive reinforcement, like treats, for the behaviour you want to see.

NAIL TRIMMING

To trim your cat's nails, use an appropriate trimmer designed for cat claws. Be careful to trim only the clear portion of the nail and keep the trimmer away from the pink "quick" – the pink/brown portion of their nail, which is connected to the cat's nerves.

Some cats may require a slow adjustment period to trimming since their paws are sensitive and they are protective of them.



If you have kittens, get them used to having their paws touched and gently rubbed so that they are accustomed to the process as they get older. Be gentle and go slow.

For cats that aren't used to nail trimming, approach them when they are most relaxed. Pet them calmly, then take a paw in your hand and gently rub it. Slowly push on the pad to extend the claw. If your cat permits you, gently trim the first claw. Trim as many claws as your cat will allow; if you only trim two or three the first time, that's great! Reward them afterward. Try the process again when they are calm and relaxed.

TAKE CARE IN HANDLING AND GROOMING

Some rescue cats may still be learning (or re-learning) to trust humans, so empathy and patience are important tools to help your cat be their best, confident cat self. Some cats don't like to be picked up, so pay attention to their signals.

- Sit down at floor level. It is ideal for a cat to approach you first. Let the cat sniff your hand first, as smell is one of the cat's most important and strongest senses.
- Take your time – talk to your cat softly, be gentle, and observe the signs your cat gives you. Encourage affection and do this until they start to enjoy being touched.
- Limit petting to safe areas. Cats generally like being pet on their face, head and upper neck. Cats may be sensitive in certain areas such as the lower back, abdomen and paws, so avoid touching these areas until you learn your cat's preferences.
- Watch for signals that it's time to stop – tail swishing, pupils dilating, and ears flattening are signs that the cat has had enough for now.
- Come back every hour or so and repeat the process for a little longer each time as often as possible.

Give your cat time to settle in and get to know you before attempting to groom them. Your cat needs to be brushed but it should be enjoyable. Try different sizes and textures of brush to determine their preferences. Brushing gives you an opportunity to examine your cat's body for any possible medical issues.

KEEP YOUR CATS INDOORS

Many of our rescue cats were discovered outside after having been abandoned or living the rough street life. These cats are ready to enjoy the rest of their lives in indoor comfort. Keeping your cat inside protects them from further dangers and trauma. Outdoor cats are subjected to the dangers of traffic, poisonous substances, injuries from other animals and cruelty from humans, and diseases. By allowing your adopted rescue cat to go outside, chances increase of them getting ill, attacked, or lost.