



1103 Woodland Street Nashville, TN 37206
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Name _____ Pet Name _____ Date _____

Declawing has probably become the most controversial of all the elective surgical procedures commonly performed by veterinarians. While it is normal for cats to scratch things (to mark territory as well as to sharpen their claws), this behavior can destroy the bond between an owner and pet cat. The declaw surgery represents a permanent solution to this problem; however, it is popularly held that a number of adverse conditions result from declawing, and that it is a form of mutilation. Pet owners need to sort out the facts from the rumors surrounding this procedure, as well as understand all of their options, surgical and non-surgical.

Non surgical options to declawing:

1. Training

Scratching is a natural behavior to cats, which makes it difficult to modify. Although it is virtually impossible to control a cat's desire to scratch completely, the usual goal is to transfer the cat's scratching instinct to a scratching post. Training tips include -

- Cats prefer to scratch upholstery with a vertical drag to the fabric. Furniture can be upholstered in an unacceptable fabric and a scratching post can be swathed in an appropriate fabric.
- Treats or catnip can be used to attract the cat to the scratching post.
- The cat can be punished for furniture scratching attempts, but it is important that the cat not connect the punishment with the person administering it (otherwise the cat will simply learn not to scratch while that person is watching). A water squirt bottle may work if the cat does not see where the squirt comes from or "Skat mats" may be placed around the furniture being scratched as a deterrent.

2. Nail trimming

3. Soft paws

Blunt acrylic nail caps are glued onto the cat's claws so that the blunt nail will not be sharp enough to cause damage. Owners can be taught to place Soft Paws on their cats at home.

Surgical options for declawing:

1. THE DISARTICULATION METHOD

This is the method employed for declawing at 5 Points Animal Hospital. A scalpel blade is used to remove the third digital phalanx by disarticulating the associated joint. Owners can expect their cat to stay two nights in the hospital after this procedure (one night with bandages and one night without). Some spotting of blood from the toes is normal during the first few days at home, and special cat litter such as "Yesterdays News" is recommended for 10 days after surgery in place of regular cat litter. Pain management is very important, and pain medication is given to control pain the day of surgery and then sent home for the next 5 - 7 days.

2. Laser Declaw

Recently, the laser declaw has received a great deal of attention. A laser is used in place of a scalpel to disarticulate the third toe bone. Advantages of laser surgery include virtually no bleeding during or after surgery, less post-operative pain, and, in many cases, a shorter hospital stay. The cost of a surgical laser is between \$20,000 - \$40,000 which makes the cost of the procedure higher for the pet owner. Operator experience is also very important, so if you are interested in a laser declaw, be sure to ask the veterinarian how long they have been performing laser declaws, how many they have done, etc.

We are happy to recommend another veterinary hospital that has a laser where you can have your cat declawed using this new technology.

3. Tendinectomy

This surgical procedure involves cutting a ligament on the underside of each toe to prevent grasping motions. The claws remain, but the cat cannot extend them. Because the incisions for this procedure are so small, the recovery time is minimal with no bandaging, special litter or blood spotting after surgery. Because the cat can no longer make grasping motions, the claws will naturally grow in a circular manner into the foot pads causing pain and infection unless the owner is able to trim the nails on a regular basis. Studies have shown that cats undergoing tendinectomy showed an equal frequency of post-operative complications when compared to cats that were declawed using other techniques. There was no difference in owner satisfaction after surgery when tendinectomy vs. other declaw procedures were performed.

Post-operative complications after declawing:

Just like with any surgical procedure, there are potential post-surgical complications. Declawing is no exception, and up to 50% of cats will experience one or more of the following complications after surgery:

- Bleeding
- Pain (acute or chronic)
- Damage to the foot pad
- Lameness (acute or chronic)
- Swelling
- Infection
- Second phalanx (toe) protrusion and palmigrade stance

Myths & rumors about declawing:

1. After declawing, a cat is likely to become fearful or experience behavior changes impairing an affectionate relationship with its owner. Numerous scientific studies have been unable to document any behavior changes post declaw. In fact, in one survey 70% of owners of declawed cats reported an improved relationship with their cat after the procedure,
2. A declawed cat cannot climb trees or catch prey. Declawed cats are not as effective at climbing trees or catching prey as cats with claws, but declawing does not prevent tree climbing or effective hunting.
3. A declawed cat has lost its ability to defend itself and should not be allowed outside. This one is true. Without claws, a cat has indeed lost an important part of his defense mechanism. We feel strongly that declawed cats should be housed indoors only.
4. Declawed cats are more likely to bite since they can no longer scratch. Declawed cats do not seem to realize they have no claws. They will continue to scratch ineffectively as if they did not know the difference. Studies have shown no increased biting tendency after declawing.
5. The post-operative period involves tremendous pain. The declawed cat will indeed have sore feet after surgery. The larger the cat, the more discomfort there is and reluctance to bear weight. Pain relievers are prescribed; however, the recovery period should not last longer than a week or so. Healing should be complete by two weeks, and any pain or lameness after this amount of time necessitates a recheck with your veterinarian.
6. A declawed cat will not use a litter box again. It is important that litter not get impacted into the declaw incisions during the recovery period. Shredded paper or special cat litter like "Yesterdays News" is recommended during recovery and some cats simply will not use these types of litters. Declawed cats do not lose their litter box training.

I have read and understand the information provided by 5 Points Animal Hospital about declawing my cat.

Name

Date