

Declawing

In general this procedure is considered for indoor cats only, regardless of sex, who have developed the vice of scratching and tearing upholstery and furnishings, particularly when attempts to train them to use a scratching post or similar device have not been successful.

However this procedure is not without controversy. This operation is now considered mutilation and many veterinarians will no longer perform this procedure. Many cities and counties have passed laws making it illegal to perform declawing procedures. In short, declawing is unnatural, psychologically harmful and inhumane.

Regardless, this procedure should never be done to outdoor cats as it would affect their ability to climb and defend themselves, nor should declawing ever be done to the rear claws of either indoor or outdoor cats.

Should this procedure be deemed necessary by the pet owner, declawing is best done when a kitten is three months of age or older. Many veterinarians suggest that the operation be deferred until a kitten is four to five months old, at which time it can be done at the same time as spaying or neutering. Kittens recover and adapt better to the procedure than do adult cats, thus the procedure should be done when the cat is younger if possible.

The operation, done under general anesthesia, involves the removal of the claw to include the nail matrix and part or all of the last bone of the toe, which is comparable to amputation of the last part of the digit. Less complete removal can result in regrowth of the claw or misshapen nail. The feet are firmly bandaged. Dressings are removed in a day or two and the cat can go home. The feet will be tender for several days, so filler in the litter box should be replaced with shredded paper to prevent sand from getting into the healing incision, thus preventing discomfort, irritation and potential infection.