

# IS IT O.K. TO DECLAW YOUR CAT?????

by Cheryl Wicks, Sammie's Friends Animal Shelter

Declawing is not just the removal of a portion of the claw.

It is the surgical amputation of the first joint of the cat's toes.

If performed on a human, it would be the equivalent of cutting off each finger at the last knuckle.

This procedure is painful and pain medication is needed. Putting your cat in this much pain cannot possibly improve your relationship with your pet.

Declawing is illegal and considered inhumane in many countries, including England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, New Zealand, Brazil, Australia, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Portugal, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, Spain, and the Netherlands.

Individuals declaw their cats for their convenience; safety of their belongings is top priority, the cat's suffering is not a significant concern. Fortunately, most people make the humane choice not to declaw their cat.

Declawing has no benefits for your cat. Claws are necessary for everything a cat does, grooming, regulating the body temperature, walking. It takes awhile after being declawed to learn to walk differently. Cats are unable to stretch their muscles properly, as cats need to dig in with their claws to stretch and strengthen their leg, shoulder, and back muscles, being unable to do this can lead to arthritis in later life.

Many people report that they are happier with their cats after declawing, because it makes the cats "better pets." Unfortunately, many people have also discovered that declawing can cause worse problems than it solves. Experts say that declawed cats have more litterbox problems than clawed cats. Not many people would choose urine-soaked carpeting over scratch marks, but this is a distressingly common outcome. In one survey, 95% of calls about declawed cats related to litterbox problems, compared to 46% for clawed cats. Cats who are declawed and lose their first line of defense may become biters. Declawed cats can also develop Joint stiffness, arthritis and lameness.

Declawing is not a routine surgery and should never be done as a "preventive." Despite their reputation for independence, cats can readily be trained to use a scratching post. Using surgery to prevent or correct a behavioral problem is

expedient, but it is not the kindest or best solution for your cat. Many people do not know that they should provide a scratching post for their cats. Scratching is a deeply ingrained instinct in cats, they need appropriate scratching posts. Rubbing the surface of the post with catnip may enhance the attractiveness of the post. There are other options; such as clear sticky strips to apply to the furniture, and other deterrents, as well as a multitude of climbing trees, mats, and other distractions that will protect your possessions. Adequate exercise, especially interactive play sessions, will also help channel kitty energy. For aggressive scratching, conscientious nail-trimming or soft plastic caps for the claws ("Soft Paws") can be used. Serious aggression problems require assistance from your veterinarian or a professional behavior consultant.

Take good care of your cat; do not declaw. It's cruel and painful and can lead to unpleasant behavior changes.