

The Facts About Declawing Cats - Amputation

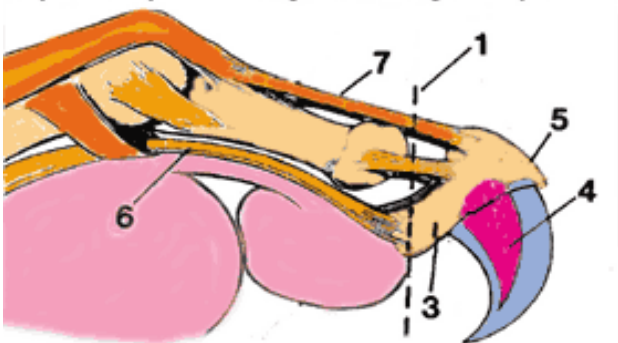
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Your cat's body is perfectly designed to give it the grace, agility and beauty that is unique to felines. Its claws are an important part of this design. Amputating the important part of their anatomy that contains the claws drastically alters the conformation of their feet. The cat is also deprived of its primary means of defense, leaving it prey to predators if it ever escapes to the outdoors.

- Your cat's claw is *not* a toenail.
- Declawing is not like a manicure. It is serious surgery.
- The claw is actually closely adhered to the bone. So closely adhered that to remove the claw, the last bone of the cat's claw has to be removed.
- Declawing is actually an amputation of the last joint of your cat's "toes".
- It is a painful surgery, with a painful recovery period.
- Removal of the last digits of the toes drastically alters the conformation of their feet and causes the feet to meet the ground at an unnatural angle that can cause back pain similar to that in humans caused by wearing improper shoes.
- A cat's claws are used for balance, for exercising, and for stretching the muscles in their legs, back, shoulders, and paws.
- The toes help the foot meet the ground at a precise angle to keep the leg, shoulder and back muscles and joints in proper alignment.

The Amputation Procedure

Onychectomy: "Declawing" - Feline Digital Amputation



1. Line of Amputation; 3. Third Phalanx; 4. Ungual Process; 5. Ungual Crest; 6. Flexor Tendon; 7. Dorsal Ligaments - are all severed and amputated in the declawing surgery. Declawing involves 10 separate and painful amputations.

Adapted from: Textbook of Small Animal Surgery 2nd ed, Slatter D. W.B. Saunders Co.

Declawing consists of amputating not just the claws, but the whole phalanx (up to the joint), including bones, ligaments, and tendons! To remove the claw, the bone, nerve, joint capsule, collateral ligaments, and the extensor and flexor tendons must all be amputated. Thus declawing is not a "simple", single surgery but 10 separate, painful amputations of the third phalanx up to the last joint of each toe. A graphic comparison in human terms would be the cutting off of a person's finger at the last joint of each finger.

Complications

Complications of this amputation can be:

- Excruciating pain
- Damage to the radial nerve
- Hemorrhage
- Bone chips that prevent healing
- Painful regrowth of deformed claw inside of the paw which is not visible to the eye
- Chronic back and joint pain as shoulder, leg and back muscles weaken
- Psychological & Behavioral Complications: Some cats are so shocked by declawing that their personalities change. Cats who were lively and friendly have become withdrawn and introverted after being declawed. Others, deprived of their primary means of defense, become nervous, fearful, and/or aggressive, often resorting to their only remaining means of defense, their teeth. In some cases, when declawed cats use the litter box after surgery, their feet are so tender they associate their new pain with the box...permanently, resulting in a life-long aversion to using the litter box. Other declawed cats that can no longer mark with their claws, they mark with urine instead resulting in inappropriate elimination problems, which in many cases, results in relinquishment of the cats to shelters and ultimately euthanasia. Many of the cats surrendered to shelters are surrendered because of behavioral problems which developed after the cats were declawed.

"Fifty percent of the cats had one or more complications immediately after surgery.... 19.8% developed complications after release." Veterinary Journals

Solutions

Appropriate Scratching post:



www.PurrfectPost.com – 31.5" tall – tall enough to allow cats to fully stretch back and shoulder muscles.

Place the post where your cat goes to scratch or in the cat's favorite spot. (You can gradually move it to a more hidden area once they get used to it.)

Rub dried catnip leaves or powder into it.

Have the cat chase a string around the post – causing her to dig her claws into it.

Soft Paws:

These are lightweight vinyl caps that you apply over your cat's own claws. Go to www.SoftPAws.com or call 1-800-989-2542



Trimming Nails

Trim nails when your cat is calm. Hold kitty on your lap with her rear end towards you.

Rub/scratch/pet her so she calms down.

Firmly hold her leg with your fingers to push/extend the claws from the paws by gently pressing the top and bottom of each toe.

With nail trimmers trim just the very end of the nail

NEVER trim near the pink/flesh colored part of the nail.

