

## **TO DECLAW OR NOT TO DECLAW**

### **What's the use?**

Claws were made on cats to serve many purposes. Such as defense against any type of predator, from the neighborhood stray cat to the pushy canine roommate.

Communicating to other cats, climbing, and playing are also important natural ways that cats use their claws.

### **Managing the damage**

Most scratching needs can be met by providing suitable scratching and climbing surfaces. Sisal, fabric, or rope posts at least 3 feet tall on sturdy bases fill the bill for many felines. Owners who opt to invest in multi-level cat furniture are usually very pleased with the result, as are their kitties.

There are some incentives you may use if your cat does not catch on to your preferred scratching areas. Catnip sprinkled on the preferred areas can draw cats to them. Strips of double-stick masking tape on the areas you don't want scratched, or temporarily covering the area (such as a sofa arm) with heavy plastic sheeting will make it less desirable to the cats.

### **Solutions in a snip**

Regularly clipping your cats toenails every 3 weeks or so will minimize any damage caused by the cat who occasionally strays from the scratching post. Here are a few tips:

If possible, try to start trimming when your cat is young- 10-12 weeks old.

Make it pleasant. Initially, do only 1-2 nails at a time. Reward with a tasty treat or a scratch in a favorite spot.

If you can't make it fun, make it fast. If you have an older cat who has already decided against manicures, the mummy method may work best. Wrap a thick towel around her, leaving only the head exposed. Bring out one paw at a time, trimming the nails as swiftly as possible. Scheduling trims after a meal may make your cat easier to manage.

Use sharp, well-made cat nail trimmers. People nail clippers may work well.

### **If You Decide To Declaw**

Be committed to keeping your cat indoors always as an important line of protection is gone.

Try to have the procedure done while your cat is young, ideally when he/she is neutered/spayed, at about 4-5 months of age. They tolerate the surgery better while they are younger and lighter.

Your cat will spend one night in the hospital after the procedure to decrease the risk of bleeding and will need you to give antibiotics as directed.

Complications are not frequent; however, some cats may be tender-footed for several days or longer.

The procedure is basically amputating the last digit of each toe (onchectomy).

Usually surgical glue is used to close the skin.

Whatever you decide, please ask us if you have any questions. We do regular nail-trimming visits and can help you learn to trim nails if you like. Our job is to make sure you and your pet are happy! Thank you for choosing us!

**Animal Medical Center of Lehigh Acres**