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Just the Facts: Declawing

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Declawing cats is painful, unnecessary, and inhumane.

Declawing, also known as onychectomy, is the surgical amputation of the last joints of a cat's toes, similar to cutting a person's finger off at the knuckle closest to the fingertip. It can mean as many as 20 amputations. When the bones are cut, tendons, nerves, and ligaments in each paw are also severed. Although it is traumatic, stressful, and causes permanent damage and pain, declawing is an elective surgery that is not necessary or effective.

Declawing isn't an easy fix to 'behavioral' issues and it doesn't keep cats from being brought to shelters.

Side effects from declawing can include hemorrhaging, paw pad lacerations, swelling, radial nerve damage, lameness, infections, reopening of wounds, and chronic pain. This chronic pain can result in behavioral issues such as aggression, biting, and urinating outside the litter box.

In fact, behavioral issues are one of the main reasons why cats are relinquished to animal shelters, where more than 70 percent are killed nationwide.

Cats need their claws.

Declawing a cat is both psychologically and physically scarring. Cats rely on their whole paw including their nails, or claws, for behavioral and grooming needs. Their claws help them to climb, hunt, protect, and defend themselves. Cats scratch to remove dead nail sheathes, stretch and strengthen their muscles, and communicate to other cats by marking territory, among other things.

There are plenty of humane alternatives to scratching behaviors

If a cat's scratching causes conflict with your furniture, there is no need to declaw—you can help fulfil their natural, normal, and necessary need to scratch by redirecting their behavior. Learn how to address unwanted scratching with humane approaches, including using scratch posts, deterrents, and nail caps, at alleycat.org/Scratching.

More people are recognizing that declawing is a harmful procedure.

Thanks to widespread education and awareness efforts, more and more people realize how much harm declawing causes cats. The American Association of Feline Practitioners, the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association, the International Society of Feline Medicine, and the World Small Animal Veterinary Association all oppose declawing. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention also does not recommend declawing.

The movement to ban declawing is growing.

At least 42 countries have made declawing illegal, including Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and Israel. In the United States, declawing is outlawed in eight cities in California, and in Denver, Colorado. Over the past few years an increasing number of state bills have been introduced to ban declawing, indicating that jurisdictions nationwide are finally recognizing declawing as cruel and inhumane.

Join us to protect cats.

Alley Cat Allies is against the cruel practice of declawing cats. We encourage everyone to speak out against declawing and support declawing bans in all communities. Join us by

taking our pledge to never declaw cats alleycat.org/NoDeclawing.

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