

## **Article: Declawing**

by Diane Novak

Some people get very upset when their new kitten or cat uses the couch as a scratching post, while others are fearful that their children will be scratched and hurt.

### **DECLAWING IS A LIFE ALTERING DECISION MADE FOR YOUR CAT**

A declawed cat is the equivalent to an **AMPUTATED CAT**. Declawing is **NOT** a deep nail cutting as is commonly thought.

#### **Cats need to exercise their nails:**

In the wild, tree bark was used by the cat to file down his long nails. These nails were used for grabbing prey. Now that we have domesticated the cat, we trim the cat's nails when it becomes too long. It can get caught on different items in your home and cause injury. Your Vet or a book on cat care can show you how to cut your cat's nails safely and without hurting either of you.

Claws are the cat's first defense in times of danger:

If a child grabs, or hurts a cat or kitten, the animal will naturally use its' claws. This not only sets limits for the child but it protects the animal from further (greater) harm.

When a cat is declawed there is no level playing ground.

When my child was small:

I slowly introduced him to cats in our home. I also monitored him so neither he or they would be hurt. I found this a perfect opportunity to teach the concept of "boundaries" and RESPECT.

#### **In the United Kingdom:**

Declawing a cat is outlawed and no vet will perform the surgery. To be totally informed, please get a copy of Catlore by Desmond Morris. To quote from the book, "To remove a cat's claws is far worse than removing the fingernails of a cat owner. This is because the claws have so many important functions in the life of a cat. A declawed cat is a maimed cat, and anyone considering having the operation done to his pet should think again."

Twelve years ago I declawed a kitten because she was tough to deal with. Tiffany would wrap herself around my ankles and just scratch away. Had I known the alternatives listed here, I could have saved both of us a lot of heartache.

A cat's nails help them maintain balance: Tiffany became very clumsy after she was declawed; often falling because she couldn't grasp onto things when she jumped.

I was left with one ANGRY kitty after Tiffany's claws were removed. Because she no longer had the use of her claws to defend herself, she reverted to biting.

Tiffany began urinating out of the litter box as well. She was taken to the Vet on several occasions and Feline Urinary Syndrome was ruled out. We created a behavior problem in our cat.

Rescue workers and shelters are often given surrendered declawed "biters." Now insult to injury; the animal has not only lost its' claws but lost its' home as well.

There are homes that have no problems with their declawed cats. They are fortunate and so is the animal or it would be out of a home.

If I knew what I know now, I would have never declawed Tiffany!

### **ALTERNATIVES TO DECLAWING:**

- A cat tree or cat condo: Either purchased or homemade, these items give a cat the chance to exercise their nails on the wood or carpet surface. If your cat/kitten is having trouble "getting the idea", rub catnip on it to help with the attraction.
- Cutting your cat or kitten's nails regularly so they don't feel the need to file them down on your furniture. Ask your Vet to demonstrate how to do this, or get a book on basic cat care.

Some years back a product called *SoftPaws* was introduced. These rubber tips cover a cat's claws. I have no direct experience with this but your veterinarian should be able to discuss whether it is a viable alternative. For more information about declawing and about *SoftPaws* visit [Declawing.com](http://Declawing.com)

### **IF YOUR CAT STILL PREFERS YOUR FURNITURE:**

Fill up a spray bottle with plain water and spritz the cat/kitten's feet with a short burst of water while saying "NO" sharply. This along with the discomfort of water should work. Eventually the word "NO" will be effective and if it isn't, the mere sight of the spray bottle will usually send kitty flying from the spot.

I have also used aluminum foil to cover the area and I've found that cats don't like this feeling.

Finding a cozy spot for them where it is okay for them to scratch is another alternative.

With all this said, the allure of furniture may still tempt your feline friend every so often. So I say with all sincerity, if you are really worried about the kids getting scratched or the furniture being ruined, it may be wiser for you to choose another type of companion animal. **OUR STRONG FEELING IS THAT CLAWS BELONG ON PAWS!**