



Fido Files: Declawing your Cat – Removing more than just claws

Ok, Ok, I know we are all about dogs here, but I thought this topic was an important one so here goes...

Some people find it hard to admit they don't walk the dog daily, or that they feed them scraps from the table, but for some reason the subject of declawing does not seem taboo. It should be! Did you know that there are at least 23 countries in the world that find declawing inhumane and in some of those countries it is actually illegal? So, why are we so quick to accept it as a meaningful way to stop a cat from scratching furniture when there are so many other less drastic things we can do?

What is declawing?

Basically, declawing is ten complicated amputations. "A graphic comparison in human terms would be the cutting off of a person's finger at the last joint of each finger" (<http://www.declawing.org/htmls/declawing.htm>). It is major surgery; walking, jumping, and using the litter box after surgery is very painful.

The Side Effects of Declawing (taken from "The New Natural Cat" – Anitra Frazier)

1. Declawed cats can be likened to being a clubfooted person
2. Declawed cats have gradual weakening of the muscles of the legs, shoulders, and the back
3. Declawed cats have impaired balance
4. Declawed cats are 75% defenceless
5. Declawed cats have irrevocably altered posture
6. Declawed cats live in a constant state of stress (because they are defenceless)
7. Declawed cats are more prone to disease (because of the constant stress)
8. Declawed cats are more apt to bite because they are more tense and nervous
9. Because cats use claws as a way of communicating – removing them can be likened to removing a person's larynx

Alternatives to Declawing

The Scratching Post - The most important step you can take towards preventing your cat from inappropriately scratching furniture and carpets is to accept that this behaviour is natural, and is not going to go away. So, it is important to find them something acceptable to use instead. Enter the scratching post...

Most scratching posts are designed to impress humans. After all, they are the ones buying them and therefore more emphasis is put on aesthetics instead of function. The most important feature of a scratching post is that it must be ROUGH – not fluffy. Remember that a cat would rather scratch the BACKSIDE of a carpet than the front. Next, it must be good and sturdy, and preferably tall enough to fully extend their bodies when stretched out scratching. When you first bring the post home, put it next to their favourite scratched up piece of



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furniture so they will notice it when they are “in the mood”. Remember to positively reinforce them when they are using it. A tasty tidbit is always nice!

Nail Trimming – Most of us do this routinely for our dogs, but don’t even consider it for our cats. Keeping your cat’s nails short ensures that they are not as sharp, and they don’t do as much harm when they are tormenting your kids or the dog, or running around the corner full tilt on your carpet.

You can get your cat used to you touching their feet by routinely doing so. Once they are used to this being a positive a regular occurrence, your cat can have their nails clipped by a groomer, or very easily by YOU. The easiest tool for nail clipping a cat is a human nail or toenail clipper – after all you are already used to handling these clippers.

For detailed instructions on how to clip nails, please visit: <http://www.declawing.org/htmls/trimming.htm>

SoftPaws – SoftPaws are a vinyl cap that is glued onto your cat’s nails. Most cats don’t even know they are wearing them and they are a humane alternative to declawing. For those of us that are into high fashion, SoftPaws come in a rainbow of colours, to match your cat or your home décor.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.softpaws.com/>

Before allowing anyone to downplay the complexity and severity of declawing, please consider trying the above options first. It is not that hard to teach a cat to use a scratching post; we have a young, resident Bengal cat in our pet food store that NEVER inappropriately scratches and he has an entire store full of pet food bags that would seem like prime real-estate for scratching. I also personally clip his claws on my own at least once a week in about five minutes or less.

The following are GREAT sources of information on cats, and cat scratching:

Book: “The New Natural Cat” – Anitra Frazier

Web: www.declawing.org

Web: www.catscratching.com

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