



## **Declawing! What You Need To Know**

**What does it mean when a cat is declawed? How is it done? The cat's claw is not a toenail at the end of the toe as in other animals. It is a movable digit attached to a muscle as a finger might be. There are strong ligaments and tendons which give power to extend & retract the claws. This is unique in cats. Without this your cat would not be able to properly grasp, hold or establish footing for proper walking, running, springing, climbing or stretching.**

**Think of the cat as having 10 toes on each foot. Declawing is akin to cutting off half their toes. When the end digit, including the claw, is removed, the sensory & motor nerves are cut, damaged and destroyed. They do not repair themselves or grow back for many months.**

**Following the surgery there is a wooden lack of feeling, then a tingling sensation. During the long convalescence the cat must walk on the stub end of the second digit. During all this time the cat can not "rest" his feet as we humans would after a similar operation. The cat will continue to scratch in a litter box, walk and attempt to jump as usual, regardless of the extreme pain.**

**Since cats have keener senses than humans, they suffer even more than humans. Many pain killing drugs, including aspirin, do not agree with cats and cause illness, even death. Anyone who has had surgery will appreciate the problems that can be created by the inability to take pain-relieving medication.**

**In addition, it is possible for the claws to grow back, but not often in the normal manner. Instead they may grow through the top or the bottom of the paw, creating a bloody and painful sore. It has been reported that this has resulted in amputation of at least one cat's foot.**

**Besides the physical mutilation, consider what declawing may do to the cat's emotions; the personality changes that may occur. Knowing that it doesn't have the means to defend itself, some cats follow the precept of the best defense is a good offense. This can result in biting without provocation, being aggressive towards other cats in the home, becoming depressed and losing the loving personality that made you adopt the pet in the first place.**

**Cats like to keep their claws sharp and clean, (and remove the outer sheath of the nail), by working on the scratching post(s) you provide. Providing your cat with the proper scratching post, and taking the time to train your cat to use it, will help preserve your furniture and carpets.**

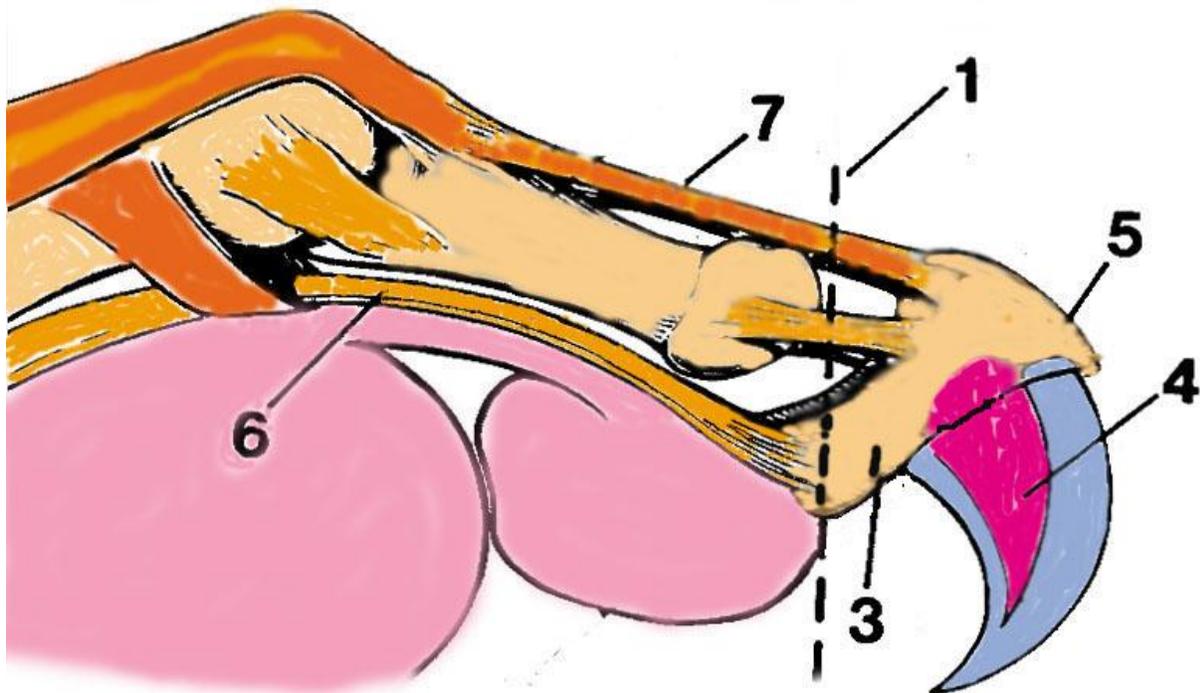
**The difference in scratching posts! Scratching posts made of soft fabrics may lead your cat to think that scratching on soft fabrics, (furniture or carpeting), is acceptable.**

**A better solution may be to provide the cat with a post made of sisal rope or carpet turned inside out. A catnip treated cardboard scratcher, which lays flat, has also been found to be very effective. Cats are intelligent and will learn proper behaviors, especially if praised when they use the scratching posts or cardboard scratcher.**

**It is essential to properly clip your cat's claws with well-made cat claw scissors. The sharp hook on the nail must be clipped off without injuring the pink quick. Cutting into the quick will hurt the cat and you may have a difficult time holding it quiet the next time.**

**Accidents do happen though, so you might want to check with your pet supply store or your vet for a product that would stop bleeding if the quick is cut. (Similar to a styptic pencil or other styptic products used for shaving by humans.)**

## ***Onychectomy: "Declawing" - Feline Digital Amputation***



***1. Line of Amputation; 3. Third Phalanx; 4. Unguis Process; 5. Unguis 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.