



Destructive Scratching with Cats

Cats' claws need regular sharpening, cats scratch on things to remove frayed, worn out claws and expose new, sharper claws. Unfortunately, all this scratching can cause a lot of damage to furniture, drapes and carpeting!

What to Do about Your Cat's scratching Habits

The best tactic when dealing with scratching is not to try to stop your cat from scratching, but instead to teach them what to scratch. An excellent approach is to provide her with appropriate, cat-attractive surfaces, such as scratching posts. The following steps will help you encourage your cat to scratch where you want her to.

- Provide a variety of scratching posts with different surfaces. Cardboard, carpeting, wood, and upholstery are some great examples. Provide vertical and horizontal posts as each cat has different preferences. Once you figure out your cat's preference for scratching, provide additional posts of that kind in various locations. Keep the posts sturdy and tall enough for them to stretch out fully.
- Encourage your cat to investigate her posts by scenting them with catnip, hanging toys on them and placing them in areas where she'll be inclined to climb on them.
- Discourage inappropriate scratching by removing or covering other desirable objects. Turn speakers toward the wall. Put plastic, double-sided sticky tape, sandpaper or upside-down vinyl carpet runner on furniture or on the floor where your cat would stand to scratch your furniture. Place scratching posts next to these objects, as alternatives.
- Clip your cat's nails regularly.
- If you catch your cat in the act of scratching an inappropriate object, you can try startling him by clapping your hands or squirting him with water. Use this procedure only as a last resort.

What NOT to Do

- Do not hold your cat by the scratching post and force her to drag her claws on it. This practice could seriously frighten your cat and teach her to avoid the scratching post completely.

- Do not throw away a favorite scratching post when it becomes unsightly. Cats prefer shredded and torn objects because they can really get their claws into the material. Used posts will also appeal to your cat because they smell and look familiar to her.

Should You Declaw Your Cat?

Some people declaw their cats to prevent or resolve a scratching problem. Declawing involves amputating the end of a cat's toes. Cats suffer significant pain while recovering from declawing. An alternative surgery, a tendonectomy, severs the tendons in a cat's toes so that she's unable to extend her nails to scratch. This procedure may or may not cause less pain. However, if you choose this type of surgery, you must clip your cat's nails regularly because she'll be unable to maintain them herself.

The Lloydminster & District SPCA discourages declawing and tendonectomies because of the extreme pain that these surgeries inevitably cause. Try the steps provided to encourage your cat to scratch in appropriate places and in turn saving your furniture.