



Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA

# Understanding Declawing

**Cats use their claws to exercise, play, stretch, climb, and mark their territory. Though kitty may use your furniture for this activity, declawing is not the answer; it is considered inhumane and may have serious side effects on your cat's health.**

Declawing is a very painful and difficult operation. It is the equivalent of removing the first joint on all your fingers. It impairs the cat's balance and causes weakness from muscular disuse. Declawed cats are defenseless. The stress resulting from being declawed creates more problems than it allegedly solves. Some declawed cats become nervous biters; many are known to become even more destructive to furniture than before the operation; and others will stop using the litterbox altogether.

Consider these alternative to this expensive, inhumane, and needless surgery:

- Exercise and play with your cat regularly. Provide your cat with things that he is allowed to scratch and train him to use these items exclusively. (Please read the sheet titled *Solving Common Problems*.)
- During the training period, set booby traps on forbidden objects such as furniture and drapes. (Please read the sheet titled *Booby traps*.)
- Temporarily confine the cat to a small area where he does not have access to furniture or other forbidden objects. A few days in a room that contains a litterbox, food, water, and of course a scratching post/log/rug, etc. is much more humane than declawing. (Please read the sheet titled *Confinement*.)
- Trim your cat's nails on a regular basis. The curved tip of the claw is the part that hooks into fabric, rugs, etc., and causes the most damage. You can give your cat a pedicure using toenail clippers or special cat nail clippers (sold at pet supply stores). Press down gently on the top of the paw. The claw will extend. Cut only the tip of the claw, avoiding the pink vessel inside the nail. If the cat is uneasy about the procedure, take the time to introduce each step gradually. Praise your cat for allowing you to grasp her paw. Get her used to letting you handle her feet. Give her treats for sitting quietly as you clip one or two nails. (Please read the sheet titled *Handling and Gentling*.)

**For more info, call our free Behavior Helpline (650/340-7022 x783 or, for Spanish, x786) or consider a low-cost consultation. To make a consultation appointment, call 650/340-7022 x667. The PHS/SPCA Behavior Department, like many shelter programs, is funded by donations.**