

DECLAWING

While scratching is a natural behavior for cats, it can often cause problems for cat owners. For years the standard solution was to declaw the cat. This painful surgical procedure involves the amputation of the last bone of the toe from which the nail grows. The Michigan Humane Society encourages cat owners to consider these humane alternatives.

Scratching Posts

A cat's owner can buy or make a scratching post with which to train his cat where appropriate scratching is to be done. The size and shape of the scratching post does not matter. Most cats prefer scratch posts made of natural coarse fiber such as sisal, hemp, cedar, cardboard or rope. Explore to find one your cat prefers. There are a number of humane deterrents on the market that may help too (i.e. double-sided sticky tape, furniture defender, cat scratching guards).

If your companion animal starts to scratch furniture, he needs to be pulled away and his front paws placed on the scratching post. If he is seen scratching furniture, a squirt of plain water (not hot) from a squirt gun or spray bottle (anywhere but in the face), accompanied by a sharp "NO," is a deterrent.

Scratching posts should be placed in the areas where your cat has been scratching, such as a couch, chair, drapes, carpeting, etc. Another should be placed in the area where he sleeps. Cats usually like to scratch and stretch upon waking. You can encourage a cat to use a scratching post by placing his favorite toy on top, dangling it over the side or rubbing the sides with catnip.

DECLAWING SHOULD BE A LAST RESORT!

Weekly Nail Trims

Keeping the nails trimmed greatly decreases potential damage. Beginning to trim a cat's nails at an early age and making it a weekly habit is the best procedure. Your pet's veterinarian can show you how to trim the nails safely.

Soft Paws Nail Caps for Cats®

This product is a humane alternative to declawing. Developed by veterinarians, Soft Paws® are vinyl caps that keep the cat's nails covered and therefore harmless 4 - 5 times longer than routine nail trimming. The application is painless and simple for veterinarian staff to perform in the office. In fact, they can show you how to apply Soft Paws® which then can be done at



home with a Soft Paws Take Home Kit®. Plastic tips are glued onto your cat's nails (much like false nails) and usually need to be reapplied every 4 - 6 weeks because tips will naturally fall off with wear and nail growth. Soft Paws® are available in 4 cat claw sizes and come in natural colors.

Common situations in which Soft Paws® can help

- Older cats at risk for declawing
- Kittens too young to be declawed
- Feline skin conditions irritated by hind claw scratching
- Destructive claw sharpening in the home
- Unintentional injuries to family members caused by playful cats

REMEMBER: *Even the most closely watched indoor cat will be unable to protect himself outside if declawed.*

For additional alternatives to declawing, contact your pet's veterinarian or a Michigan Humane Veterinary Center at **866-MHUMANE**.