

THE CAT CLAW REPORT

Scratching & Claw Care

Scratching is a normal part of cat behavior. This explains why they do it, how to manage scratching in a natural way, and what to know about declawing.



Why Do Cats Scratch?

Scratching is natural and healthy. Cats scratch to:

- Keep their claws healthy
- Stretch their bodies
- Mark their space
- Relieve stress

Scratching is not bad behavior. It's an important part of feline well-being.

How Can I Reduce Scratching Damage?

Most scratching concerns can be managed without surgery through regular nail care, environmental support, and scratch training.

Nail care options

- Regular nail trims (at home or at the clinic)
- Supporting positive nail trimming experiences
 - Positive training and the use of treats when performing nail trims
 - Paw 'massages' to get cats accustomed to handling paws
 - Trim only 1–2 nails at a time
 - Medications like gabapentin for very anxious cats
- Nail caps (such as Soft Paws)

Environmental support

- Provide appropriate scratching surfaces (both vertical and horizontal)
- Use catnip on/near the scratching post
- Provide catios, window hammocks, and other environmental enrichment

Scratch training

- Place appropriate scratchers adjacent to 'unauthorized' target
- Reward scratching on appropriate surfaces with high value treats
- Scent neutralization: clean previously scratched items with enzymatic cleaner and spray with Feliway
- Use deterrents such as aluminum foil or self-adhesive plastic scratch protectors
- Avoid punishment, which increases stress

These options can be tailored to your cat's comfort level.



Are There Alternatives to Declawing?

Yes. Nail trims, nail caps, scratch training, use of proper scratching posts, and other environmental enrichment are effective for most cats.

Declawing does not fix why cats scratch. Declawing alternatives protect both your home and your cat's health.

What is Declawing?

Declawing is not just removing the nail. It is the amputation of the last bone of each toe.

During surgery:

- Bone is removed
- Nerves, tendons, and soft tissues are cut
- The paw is permanently changed

Does Declawing Cause Pain?

Yes. Declawing is painful and carries risks.

Possible short-term problems:

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Swelling
- Infection
- Nerve injury

Possible long-term problems:

- Chronic nerve pain
- Arthritis
- Limping or walking differently
- Nail regrowth from leftover bone
- Behavior changes (aggression, isolating, urinating outside the litterbox)
- Bone infection

Some cats may also experience pain years later, similar to phantom limb pain in people.



Our Commitment to You and Your Cat

We believe in honest conversations, humane care, and helping you find solutions that support your cat's comfort, natural behavior and long-term wellbeing.

Questions? We're happy to show you nail trimming, recommend scratching posts, or discuss safe alternatives that work for your home.

Learn more at catfriendly.com and catvets.com
