

HOLT VETERINARY CLINIC
HUGH T. FAUSER, M.S., D.V.M.
JENNIFER L. REES, D.V.M.

1836 CEDAR STREET
HOLT, MICHIGAN 48842
PHONE: (517) 694-9510

FELINE DECLAWING AND NAIL CLIPPING

If your cat's instinctive desire to sharpen its claws leads to destruction of household furnishings, draperies and carpeting, or results in snagging your clothing or scratching your skin, consider declawing your cat. Because a cat is able to control whether its claws are sheathed (retracted) or extended for maximum gripping, your cat may have mastered control of its claws to suit your requirements, and a declawing procedure is unnecessary. However, the introduction of a different upholstery fabric, carpeting, or drapes may stimulate destructive behavior in an adult cat for the first time.

To help you decide if declawing would benefit you and your cat, some frequently asked questions and answers follow:

IS THERE ANY MEDICAL ADVANTAGE TO REMOVING FRONT CLAWS? No, other than peace of mind for the owner that the threat of damage from scratching has ended. There is no medical advantage or disadvantage to the cat. Most declawed cats continue the instinctive scratching routine, but no damage to household items results.

WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES TO REMOVING FRONT CLAWS? Some cat owners find that they and their cat can cooperate in using a specially designed clipper to trim the claws, just short of the quick, on a biweekly or monthly schedule.

DO REAR CLAWS NEED TO BE CLIPPED OR DECLAWED? As a rule, the rear claws are kept worn by cats as long as they have any roughened surface, such as concrete basement, garage or driveway floors, to walk on. Indoor cats, who luxuriate exclusively on carpeting, need to have their rear claws trimmed. Unless a cat is confined exclusively indoors, hind claw removal is not recommended. Hind claws are needed for self-protection.

ARE CLAWS NECESSARY FOR SELF DEFENSE? A cat only needs its rear claws for fighting and tree-climbing. The effective damage a cat inflicts during a fight is with its sharp teeth and the powerful kicking of its hind legs. A toothless cat is one who is truly disadvantaged.

AT WHAT AGE ARE FRONT CLAWS REMOVED? A kitten may be declawed as early as eight weeks of age. If destruction to household furnishings and humans is not a problem, declawing may be delayed until your cat is spayed or castrated (6 to 9 months of age) and has completed its vaccinations. Otherwise, the procedure can be performed if and when you identify the need to do so.

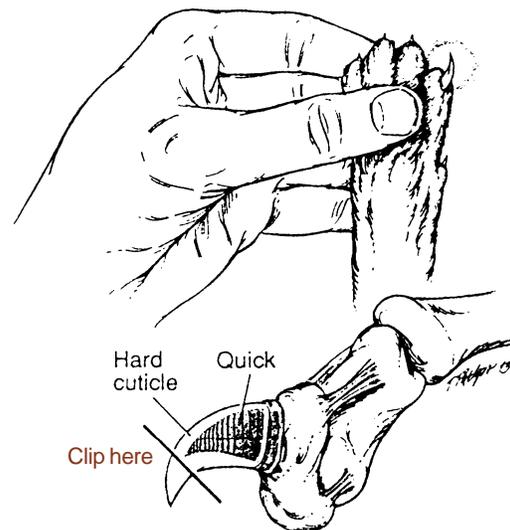
WILL MY CAT BE IN PAIN? No surgery-anesthesia procedure is taken lightly, however, the choice of anesthetic and the closure method of the surgical wound minimize the length of time for the surgery and recovery. Because there are many blood vessels in the toes, a pressure bandage is applied and remains in place for 24 hours after surgery. All cats and kittens are sedated the first hours following surgery. This keeps them from using their front paws and prevents them from pulling their pressure bandages off.

When your cat goes home, there may be some transient tenderness in the toes, especially when he or she jumps down from a chair, window sill, or other furniture.

Expect cats older than eight years to have a slightly prolonged time of paw tenderness. Litter box use is not disrupted and no psychological damage from declawing cats and kittens occurs.

NAIL CLIPPING

Regular nail clipping is one way to contain the damage that sofa-shredding cats can inflict.



- 1 Firmly hold your cat in a comfortable position in your lap. (If you clutch your cat in a vise-like grip, he or she will probably protest.)
- 2 Gently press the paw pad to force the claw forward.
- 3 Clip only the white, hard cuticle (painless). If you accidentally cut into the pink quick (painful), your cat will certainly protest. (To stop any bleeding, apply pressure or dab the cut with a styptic pencil.)
- 4 When the task is done, reward your cat with a food treat or with play time.

ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE CAN BE ANSWERED BY CALLING OUR OFFICE.
PRACTICE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE, SURGERY AND DENTISTRY