

Animal Hospital

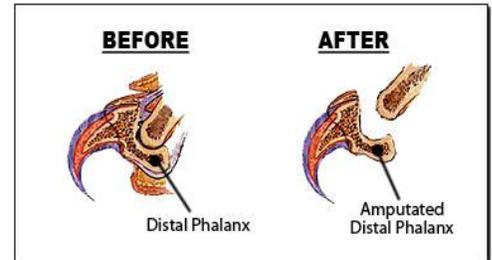
of Shawnee Hills

Healthy Pets Happy Hearts

Onychectomy (Declawing) In Domestic Cats: Procedure and Alternatives

There are several reasons why a declaw surgery of a domestic cat may be desired. While we will perform front feet declaws in domestic cats we feel it is our responsibility to inform clients of what exactly a declaw surgery is and give alternatives to a declaw surgery.

Declawing involves the complete removal of the last bone of each toe. This last bone must be entirely removed or there will be regrowth of the nail. Declawing is therefore not just removal of the nail. In our hospital we use a special nail clipper (Miller forge) to dis-articulate between the first and second bone of each toe. Cats are under general anesthesia and have a local anesthetic injected at the wrist to help with pain. Once the bone is dis-articulated, tissue glue is used to close the skin and a bandage is placed around each foot. Cats stay in our hospital for two days on pain medication and antibiotics. The day after surgery, we remove the bandages and therapy laser each foot for pain control and to speed healing. Patients go home the following day. Kitties will need to use a special pelleted newspaper litter for another week. Complete healing may take up to three weeks.



In general, we will declaw kittens if they weigh at least 4lbs and may refuse cats over two years of age, depending on the circumstances. Always consult your veterinarian before pursuing a declaw surgery.

Risks: There are inherent risks associated with any anesthetic procedure, including, but not limited to anesthetic complications, side effects associated with analgesics, hemorrhage, infection, and pain.

Alternatives: Scratching is a normal feline behavior. Cats scratch to condition their claws by removing old nail sheaths, scent mark objects with the glands on their paws, visually mark objects by leaving shredded matter as evidence, stretch and exercise their forelegs, and enjoy a pleasant sensation. Here are some tips to help promote appropriate scratching behaviors:

1. Provide suitable implements for normal scratching behavior. Examples include scratching posts, cardboard boxes, lumber or logs, and carpet or fabric remnants affixed to stationary objects. Implements should be tall or long enough to allow full stretching, and be firmly anchored to provide necessary resistance to scratching.
2. Place appropriate scratching objects near scratched furniture and make them more attractive than the furniture. Additionally, place scratching objects near resting areas so the cat can stretch and scratch after resting.
3. Train cats through positive reinforcement (eg. treats, use of catnip, verbal praise, etc) to use the above implements.
4. Trim cats' nails every one to two weeks
5. Consider artificial nail caps (Soft Paws)
6. Avoid engaging in rough play to prevent harm to yourself or other cats.

Photo courtesy of: http://www.ctcatconnection.org/images/dcl_removal.jpg
Information provided by <https://www.aaha.org/professional/resources/declawing.aspx#gsc.tab=0>

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