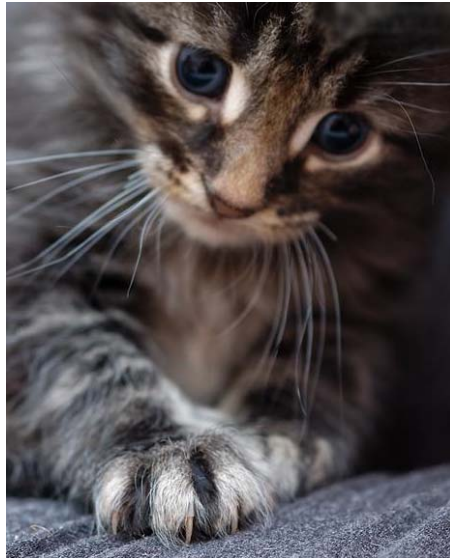


DECLAWING (Onychectomy)



EXCLUSIVELY CATS VETERINARY HOSPITAL

Steven J. Bailey, DVM.
Toni S. Brooks, DVM.
Angela H. Palen, DVM
6650 Highland Road
Waterford, MI 48327
(248) 666-5287

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Should I consider having my cat “declawed”?

Cats have the potential to be very destructive to households or injurious to people with their claws. Cat scratches can easily become infected. Children and elderly adults have tender skin that can sustain scratches even unintentionally. Declawing can prevent or minimize these problems.

There is much debate regarding the decision to declaw a cat. Most people feel that declawing cats is a humane compromise that allows the cat to coexist in a non-destructive manner with us in our homes.

Are there any alternatives to surgery?

Alternatives to declawing are 1) frequent trimming of nails, 2) commercially available plastic “nail caps,” 3) surgical cutting of the tendon that controls the claws use, and 4) house proofing and persistent/intensive training. All of these procedures have advantages and disadvantages, which we encourage you to discuss with our staff.

If I decide to have my cat declawed should I have all the claws removed or just the claws on the front feet?

We normally recommend that only the front claws be removed. Usually any damage that cats can do occurs while they are sharpening the front claws. Some owners with leather furniture will decide to have the rear claws removed to protect their investment as they can poke holes in the leather while jumping off. We recommend having the front and rear claws done at different times, since cats have a more difficult time with surgery on all four feet at once. (After 8 months of age, we will not do all four feet at the same time, but will offer a discount on the rear paws if done within 2 months of the first surgery.)

At what age can my kitten be declawed?

We would like your kitten to weigh at least 2.5 pounds before undergoing general anesthesia. This is usually around 10 to 12 weeks of age. Generally, the surgery is easier on younger cats, so if the decision to declaw is likely to be made in the future, it is better to have the surgery performed while the kitten is still young.

What does surgery involve?

The last bone in your cat’s toe (or finger if you prefer) is 75% claw. The entire bone is surgically removed by cutting the ligaments and tendons where they attach to the claw. All cutting is done with a scalpel rather than disinfected nail trimmers. This technique allows us to preserve the surrounding supportive tissue without removing any part of the pad.

Your cat will be anesthetized using a gas anesthesia (Isoflurane) rather than an injectable anesthetic. Isoflurane is one of the safest veterinary anesthetics available. Recovery is immediate once the gas anesthesia has been discontinued. Bandages are placed on the feet after surgery and are removed the following morning. Cats and kittens are observed for bleeding and are discharged in the afternoon if there are no problems noted.

What kind of pain relief will my cat receive after surgery?

Your cat will receive an injection of a pain medication while under anesthesia. This will normally keep him or her very comfortable for the first day after surgery. We also apply a Duragesic pain patch. A small area will need to be shaved on one side and the adhesive patch is placed on the skin to provide a steady stream of pain relief that will be absorbed through the skin. The medication will provide pain relief for 5 days after surgery.

Cats that are over the age of 12 months and cats or kittens that are being all 4 declawed are required to have the Duragesic pain patch.

What precautions do I need to take for my cat when he/she comes home?

We recommend keeping your cat quiet and somewhat restricted after surgery. If a cat is likely to be very active immediately after surgery, it may need to be confined to a small room. Jumping can be a problem, especially jumping down from heights, since this can cause injury to already tender feet. Most cats will restrict their own activity until they are feeling better, but occasionally there will be a rambunctious cat who will not “follow the rules” and will need to be cage confined.

How do I schedule an appointment for surgery and are there any surgical requirements?

Declawing is performed Monday through Friday by appointment only. Your cat or kitten will be admitted the morning of the surgery between 8:00am and 10:30am. If more convenient, you could bring him/her the night before.

We require that your cat or kitten be current on its vaccinations and that it has been blood tested for feline leukemia. We also require pre-operative blood screening. This health screen includes BUN (kidney test), ALT (liver test), PCV/PP (to check for dehydration or anemia) and urine analysis with culture.

Should my cat be allowed outside after surgery?

Some cats that continue to roam will still adapt well to climbing trees and defending themselves; others may not fare as well and could be place at excessive risk. Although it may not always be possible, we encourage that all cats be confined indoors, especially if they have been declawed.

Please feel free to discuss any questions or concerns you have about declawing or any other topics with the staff at EXCLUSIVELY CATS.

Thank you for allowing us to help you care for your cat!