

# Calgary Humane Society

## Declawing of Cats

### **Position:**

The Calgary Humane Society does not support *onychectomy* (declawing) of domestic cats as a routine procedure and discourages veterinarians from performing this type of surgery.

### **Rationale:**

- Scratching is a normal feline behaviour used for olfactory and visual communication, as well as claw maintenance.
- In some European countries onychectomy is considered unethical and inhumane (United Kingdom) or even banned (Switzerland).
- Complications of declawing can include excessive bleeding, infection, exposure of the remaining bone of the toe or distorted claw re-growth, and the risks associated with general anesthesia. Some cats may develop an aversion to using the litter or to having their feet handled, possibly due to phantom pain.
- Alternatives, such as regular nail trimming and providing and encouraging the use of scratching posts or boxes, are preferred.
- If aggression is feared, the underlying causes of aggression should be treated before considering onychectomy.
- Declawing creates an additional concern for cats allowed to roam, since declawing diminishes the cat's defenses. The CHS opposes allowing cats to roam (see the CHS position on Indoor Cats).

### References:

1. Frank, D. (2002). "Management problems in cats," in: Horwitz, Mills, and Heath S., eds. *British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) Manual of Canine and Feline Behavioural Medicine*, Blackwell Publishing, Ames, Iowa, USA.
2. Overall, K. (1997). *Clinical Behavioural Medicine for Small Animals*. Mosby-Year Book Inc. Missouri, USA.