



## Declawing of Cats

### Position:

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