

## The Pros and Cons of Declawing

**Learn the facts about the procedure of declawing to help decide if the surgery is suitable for your cat.**

Posted: Tue Nov 26 00:00:00 PST 2002

Cat owners commonly want to know whether declawing is a "humane procedure." A properly performed declaw is minimally traumatic to the cat and does not change behavior as is often reported. All declaws should be done under general anesthesia with pain medication administered during and after the procedure, regardless of whether the cat outwardly demonstrates pain. A cat's instinctual M.O. is to hide pain-demonstration of vulnerability is taboo in the wild kingdom. A cat can be in considerable discomfort without external signs.

A fore-foot declaw renders a cat less able to protect itself, and the owner must keep the cat in a safe environment. Declawing all four feet is strongly discouraged as the rear feet seldom cause damage to people or furniture and provide some degree of protection and tree-climbing ability if necessary. Combining the declawing procedure with neutering reduces anesthetic exposure, cost and recovery time. Younger cats show more rapid return to normal mobility than older cats. Every attempt should be made to perform the declaw prior to one year of age. Cats expected to spend unsupervised time outdoors should never be declawed.

Other options include flexor tendonectomy (a procedure in which the cat's tendons are cut, curtailing its ability to extend its claws), nail caps, frequent nail trims and behavior modification techniques. It may be better for the cat to experience the short-term discomfort associated with a surgical procedure than a lifetime of a yelling, irate owner and possible sentencing to the outdoors or the pound.