



THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES

The   
**Paw**   
Project

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VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION..

## Support a ban on declawing cats



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**Declawing is no trip to the spa. It involves amputating the last part of a cat's 10 front toes and sometimes the last part of the 8 back toes as well. A comparison in humans would be cutting off a person's fingers at the last joint.**

- Scratching is a natural behavior for cats. Scratching removes the dead husks from cats' claws, marks territory visually and through scent glands in their paws and stretches their muscles. Unfortunately, what is natural behavior for a cat often is considered misbehavior by a cat's human guardian, especially when furniture or other household objects are damaged in the process.
- One in five cats has long-term complications from declaw surgery and 50% have immediate post-surgical complications. One in three cats demonstrate at least one behavioral problem after declawing, as reported by their owners.
- Mars Veterinary Health, the largest veterinary hospital system in the U.S., which runs 2000+ VCA, Banfield and Blue Pearl clinics and employs 10% of all practicing veterinarians in the U.S., stopped offering declaw surgery in February 2020. "Every medical procedure supported by our veterinary practices has been put in place with the health and well-being of pets in

### Declawing is not performed in most countries of the world

- Nontherapeutic declawing of cats is prohibited or considered unethical practice in most countries, including Sweden, Brazil, Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and much of the European Union. The European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals prohibits the procedure.
- New York became the first U.S. state to ban nontherapeutic declawing in 2019. With broad bipartisan support, the bill passed the Assembly by a 115-31 vote and passed the Senate by a 50-12 vote. Fifty-five New York animal rescue organizations/shelters and 143 New York veterinarians endorsed the bill.
- Declawing is banned in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Santa Monica, Berkeley, Beverly Hills, Burbank, Culver City, and West Hollywood, CA, Denver, CO, Austin, TX, St. Louis (city and county), MO, Pittsburgh, PA and Madison, WI.
- The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association declared itself opposed to nontherapeutic declawing in 2017 which is banned by eight out of ten provincial veterinary associations: Nova Scotia, British Columbia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, Alberta, New Brunswick, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan.
- California and Rhode Island also prohibit landlords from requiring a tenant's cat be declawed as a condition of occupancy.

mind and, based on this, we do not support the elective declawing of any animal in our veterinary practices.”

## Declawing is bad for cats and bad for people.

- According to research published in the Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery in 2018 declaw surgery in cats was associated with a significant increase in the odds of developing adverse behaviors, including biting, barbering, aggression and inappropriate elimination, as well as signs of back pain. These are common reasons for the relinquishment of cats to shelters.
- The documented increased biting behavior of declawed cats can lead to more severe disease in people than cat scratches. Cat bites carry a dangerously high infection risk to healthy and immunocompromised people alike. According to the Mayo Clinic, one in three patients with cat bites needs to be hospitalized, with two-thirds of those hospitalized requiring surgical treatment.
- The American Association of Feline Practitioners in its position statement opposing declawing noted: “While it has been suggested that declawing is acceptable to prevent spread of zoonotic disease(s) to immune-compromised people, current research demonstrates the greater value of proper hygiene and parasite control.” The National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Infectious Diseases Society of America jointly stated that declawing is “not advised” to protect the health of even severely immune-compromised patients, including those with HIV.

## It’s time to stop declawing

- Declawing is still too commonly practiced and not only as a last resort. According to the AVMA’s estimation, vets declaw 24.4% of domestic cats.
- Some veterinarians have opposed government regulation of medical practice decisions. However, declawing is a distinctly injurious and unethical “convenience” procedure that lacks medical purpose. Many U.S. veterinarians continue to declaw despite professional recommendations against it, and clients are often not made aware of its high risk of permanent adverse effects or its controversies.
- Many viable alternatives to declawing exist (such as behavior training, nail caps, double-sided tape applied to furniture), as do numerous options in furniture selection, placement and protection which do not physically or behaviorally harm the cat.

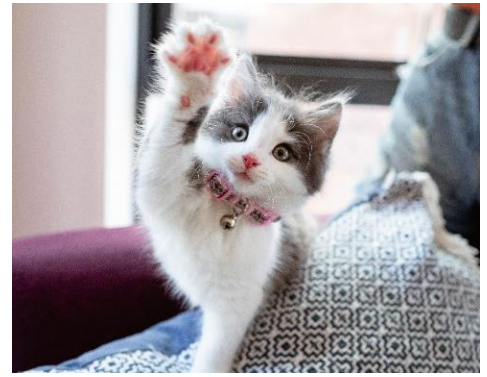


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## Declawing doesn’t guarantee a cat will remain in the home.

- A declaw ban does not lead to an increase in cats surrendered to animal shelters or an increase in euthanasia, as shown by a review of data from three years prior and three years after a provincial declaw ban in British Columbia.
- The American Association of Feline Practitioners and the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association assert the likelihood that a cat may be euthanized, abandoned or relinquished should not be the basis of a decision to declaw and that declawing “is not considered to be a justifiable alternative to relinquishment.”
- Publicly available intake data for shelters in the cities where declaw bans were enacted shows all shelter systems experiencing lower cat intakes following enactment of the legislation. For example, the Los Angeles municipal shelter documented a 43% reduction in the number of owner-surrendered cats in the five years after the declaw ban was enacted compared to the five years before.

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