



City of Allentown

Anti Declaw Presentation

Stephany Gallagher, Feline Urban Rescue and Rehab (FURR) President
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- As we continue to evolve as a more compassionate and ethical society, we have seen improvements in laws that protect the domesticated and wild animals with which we share our planet and our homes. Through this growth, we have come to recognize that the declawing of cats is inhumane, cruel, and barbaric mutilation of our companion animals. Claws are intrinsic to being a cat. Claws are used to walk, grasp, play, groom, stretch, knead, climb, balance, and for self-defense.
- Declawing is a medical procedure called an Onychectomy which is the removal of the third phalanx that renders cats unable to scratch. The most common method of onychectomy is disarticulation and removal of the third phalanx (P3) by laser, scalpel, or nail guillotine. Unlike humans, cats' claws grow directly from the bone. When a cat is declawed, the cat's toe bones and claws are amputated. Despite its name, declawing isn't just the removal of a cat's claws. It is the amputation of the last bone of each toe. If the same procedure was performed on a human, his finger would be amputated at the last knuckle. Declawing is extremely painful and requires hospitalization and intensive pain management, with frequent changes of pressure bandages.
- Part of the problem with declawing is that the general public does not understand the significant life-changing surgery and the vet is not likely to explain that the procedure is an amputation and mutilation of their pet. If they did, who would ever choose this elective surgery? This procedure is also lucrative for Veterinarians to perform.
- With Declawing, pain is both immediate and long-lasting. Complications include bone and nail regrowth under the skin, anatomical changes, infection, and arthritis of the wrist, elbow, shoulders, and knees of cats. When cats no longer have their claws they walk differently on their feet due to pain and attempts to compensate for their amputations.

- Cats that have been declawed often develop behavioral problems. These problems are typically reported to shelters and rescues as aggression which includes biting, as cats no longer have their claws as their defense. A cat bite is far more dangerous than a cat scratch. For this reason, The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the National Institute of Health (NIH) do not support declawing. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) also does not consider the potential exposure to zoonotic diseases from cat scratches as a justification for declawing. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) also strongly oppose declawing. The American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) as well as large international veterinary hospitals oppose declawing.
- The other most common behavioral problem reported to animal shelters and rescues from owners requesting to surrender their declawed cat is inappropriate elimination, meaning cats are not using the litter box, most likely due to pain in the paws, but are defecating and urinating in other areas of the home, including on furniture.
- It is **not true** that banning declawing will cause more cats to be surrendered to shelters or fewer people to adopt cats. Shelters and rescues see quite the opposite actually. What we see are owners surrendering declawed cats due to behavioral problems resulting from declawing. Veterinarians aren't the ones at the end of the problems declawing has caused, it is the shelters and the rescues.
- There are many ways to prevent cats from scratching furniture - 82% of cats that are declawed are reported to be declawed in order to avoid scratching furniture. These include furniture protectors, scratching posts, and nail caps, along with trimming cats' nails regularly.
- The first City to ban declawing was West Hollywood. Many cities have since banned declawing within their city limits and Pittsburgh was the most recent city to do so in September 2021.
- Declawing has been banned in other countries for quite some time, including 42 Countries and currently 8 out of the 10 provinces in Canada. New York was the first State to ban declawing in 2019 and Maryland followed suit in 2022. Delaware may be next. In Pennsylvania, HB 1624 was authored by Representative Liz Handbidge and co-authored by Representative Steve Malagari. This bill remains in the judiciary committee and has not yet been brought to a vote. Allentown is in a unique position to set the tone of compassion for cats in the State of Pennsylvania by passing an anti-declaw ordinance within the city.

- On behalf of all cats within the City of Allentown and the advocates who continuously fight to improve their lives, as well as care for the abused, neglected, and declawed cats surrendered by their owners due to behavioral problems, we greatly appreciate the Council's time and consideration and are hopeful that you will support passing an ordinance to ban declawing in the City of Allentown. You will be one of the leaders in making declawing illegal within the Commonwealth and eventually our Country.

Respectfully Submitted,
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