

## Cat Clinic of Iowa City Statement on Claw Amputation

January 2019

Beginning this year, the Cat Clinic of Iowa City will no longer offer claw amputation (declawing) surgery as a service except in cases of medical necessity. Recent research shows that cats who have been declawed are at increased risk of developing behavior problems such as aggression, going to the bathroom outside of the litterbox, and overgrooming. These cats are also at increased risk of having pain in the paws, legs, and spine. We are committed to providing the best possible life-long care of all our feline patients. As such, we have determined that the long-term consequences of claw amputation outweigh the benefits. We believe the individual species-specific needs of cats should be a consideration in pet ownership and providing opportunities to engage in normal scratching behavior is one of those needs.

General recommendations for the prevention and management of unwanted scratching problems:

- Provide at least one scratching post or cat tree that is 3 feet tall or taller and is covered with your cat's preferred scratching material in locations where your cat prefers to scratch.
- Reward your cat every time she uses a scratching post. Rewards may include treats, playtime, and praise.
- Regular claw trimming reduces the risk of injury or damage caused by scratching.
- Never use your hands or feet as objects of play.
- To prevent boredom: use food puzzles for feeding and provide a variety of toys for solitary play and interactive play.
- Provide adequate vertical space to allow your cat to get away from any undesirable attention or activities, especially in homes with dogs, children, and multiple cats.
- Providing adequate and separate resources such as food, sleeping areas, and toys will reduce intercat aggression in homes with multiple cats.
- Punishment is not effective. Deterrents may be useful temporarily.

We understand that cat owners are faced with difficult decisions when scratching behavior becomes a problem. We are available to provide support, guidance, and recommendations for your individual circumstances by continuing to offer free scratching behavior consultations. If you are currently experiencing a problem with scratching behavior and would like more information, please contact us at 319-351-2252 or [catclinic@gmail.com](mailto:catclinic@gmail.com). Our handout about scratching behavior and claw amputation is available [here](#).

**Dr. Brian Hayes and the staff of the Cat Clinic of Iowa City**

References:

Martell-Moran N, Solano M, and Townsend HGG. **Pain and adverse behavior in declawed cats** *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery* 2017 <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1098612X17705044>

Wilson C, Bain M, DePorter T, et al. **Owner observations regarding cat scratching behavior: an internet-based survey**  
*Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery* 2015 <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1098612X15594414>

Additional Resources:

<https://www.catvets.com/public/PDFs/PositionStatements/2017-DeclawingStatement.pdf>

<http://foodpuzzlesforcats.com/guide>

<https://catfriendly.com/cat-care-at-home/what-your-cat-needs-to-feel-secure/>

<http://www.whycatwhy.com/cat-vertical-space-101-the-ultimate-guide/>