

Declawing of Domestic Felines

Position:

The Edmonton Humane Society does not support onychectomy (declawing) of domestic cats.

Rationale

- Scratching with claws is a normal feline behavior used for olfactory and visual communication, as well as claw maintenance.
- Fellow welfare agencies in Canada (e.g. BC SPCA, Calgary Humane Society) and the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association oppose medically unnecessary surgical procedures.
- In some European countries onychectomy is considered unethical (United Kingdom) or even banned (Switzerland).
- Risks include excessive bleeding, infection, exposure of remaining toe bone or distorted claw re-growth, and complications inherent with surgical procedures. There is no medical rationale for declawing.
- The EHS can educate clients, provide resources, and address potential owner concerns about destruction or aggression. Alternatives to declawing include regular nail trimming, plastic nail caps, and encouraging use of scratching posts/boxes. If aggression is a concern, the underlying causes of aggression should be treated rather than the symptom.

References

1. British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. "Cosmetic and Other Non-Therapeutic Alterations." BC SPCA position statement, Vancouver, 2014.
2. Canadian Federation of Humane Societies. "Declawing of Cats." CFHS position statement, Ottawa, n.d.
3. Canadian Veterinary Medical Association. "Onychectomy (Declaw) of the Domestic Felid." CVMA position statement, Ottawa, 2011.
4. Overall, Karen L. Manual of Clinical Behavioral Medicine for Dogs and Cats. St. Louis: Elsevier Mosby, 2013.