

Cat Nail Care

Trimming a cat's claws every two to three weeks is an important part of maintaining your pet's health. Not only does a quick trim protect you, your pet and your family, it can also save your sofa, curtains and other furniture.

Nail-trimming is also a fast and effective alternative to declawing (which involves surgical amputation and can cause behavioral and health issues)

If the idea of trimming a cat's claws has you nervous, just remember that all it takes is some patience and a bit of practice.

There are plenty of tools available to trim a cat's claws. Use the one that works best for you and your pet. There are tons of nail clipping options available online or at pet stores but it is okay to use human nail clippers. Whatever your tool, be sure the blade remains sharp. The blunt pressure from dull blades may hurt an animal and cause a nail to split or bleed. Keep something on hand to stop bleeding, such as styptic powder, cornstarch or a dry bar of soap (to rub the bleeding nail across).



Because cats' temperaments and dispositions vary greatly, there is no "perfect" way to handle a cat while trimming their claws. Some cats do well with no restraint at all, but most cats need to be held firmly but gently to make sure that no one gets hurt. Some prefer covered eyes & a cocooning method.

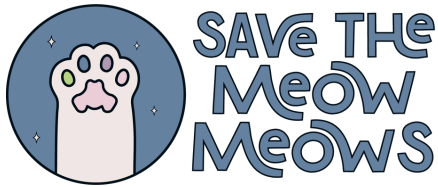
If you're trying to cut your cat's nails by yourself, try resting the cat in the crook of one arm while holding one paw with the other hand. Ideally, with a helper, they can hold the cat while you clip the nails, or just ask them to scratch your cat's favorite spot or offer up a distracting treat.

Take a paw in your hand and use your thumb and pointer finger to gently press down on the top and bottom of the paw on the joint just behind the claw. This will cause the claw to extend so you can quickly but carefully snip off the sharp tip and no more.

Don't get too close to the pink part of the nail called "the quick," where blood vessels and nerve endings lie. Just like the pink part of a human fingernail, the quick is very sensitive; cutting into this area will likely cause bleeding and pain.

It's common to only cut the front claws, but take a look at the rear claws just in case they've gotten too long, especially if their sharp tips hurt you when your cat leaps on or off your lap. Since most cats fuss more about having their rear claws clipped, start with the front claws.

If you aren't able to trim all 10 nails at once, don't worry. Few cats remain patient for more than a few minutes, so take what you can get, praise your pet for cooperating, perhaps give them a little treat, and then be on the lookout for the next opportunity—maybe even a catnap—to cut those nails!

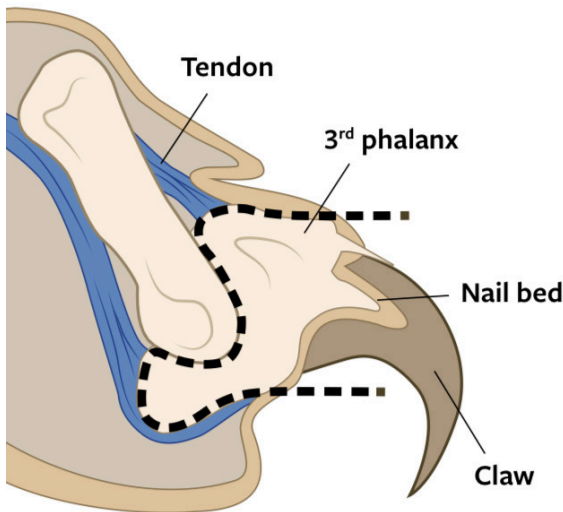


DECLAWING: The PAINFUL TRUTH



What is declawing?

Declawing is the amputation of the last bone of each toe. It would be like cutting off your fingers at the last knuckle.



Source: LifeLearn Inc.



How does declawing harm my cat?

Declawing can cause nerve damage, phantom pain, pain from bone fragments left behind or arthritis, and pain-related behavior issues like biting and avoiding the litter box. For these reasons and more, a growing number of veterinary organizations oppose declawing.

Cats by nature have a need to scratch to mark their territory, stretch their bodies, and remove the worn-out outer claws to expose fresher sharper claws underneath. While this may result in tattered curtains, torn up sofas, and carpets left in shreds—destructive behaviors that can leave frustrated pet parents, declawing is not the solution.

Onychectomy, or declawing, is a surgical process in which the front knuckles of the cat's toes are amputated so the animal can no longer use its claws to scratch household items or hurt others during rough play. This major surgery has the potential to result in numerous side effects

- Declawing surgery is painful for the cat
- Potential for infection after surgery
- Surgical amputation is an unnecessary mutilation
- Declawing takes away a natural behavior for cats
- Declawed cats cannot defend themselves from other animals
- Some cats may have long-lasting pain or phantom pain
- Lameness (limping or problems walking, running or climbing)
- Some people claim declawed cats develop other unwanted behavior issues like aggression and inappropriate elimination (urinating outside the litter box)

To protect home furnishings, give your cat alternative places to scratch. Use positive reinforcement training to teach your cat where they can scratch. While your cat is learning, cover furniture with a tight-fitting sheet or use double-sided sticky tape on the places your cat tends to scratch.

- Offer tall, sturdy scratching posts and pads from different materials like carpet, sisal, wood and cardboard.
- Place multiple scratching posts around your home and near the furniture you don't want scratched.
- Try both vertical posts and horizontal or angled boards to learn your cat's preference.

If your cat intentionally scratches people out of fear or aggression, consult a trainer or behaviorist for guidance on behavior modification using positive reinforcement. To prevent accidental scratches, keep your cat's claws trimmed and ask your veterinarian about soft plastic nail caps.