



**Humane
World for
Animals™**

Formerly called the Humane Society of the United States and Humane Society International

An advocate's guide to ending cat declawing

A toolkit for passing local ordinances

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Introduction

Scratching is a normal behavior for cats. Sometimes they scratch our couches, shower curtains, dining room chairs or even us! Unfortunately, not all owners have patience for cats who scratch, and some owners aren't aware of the alternatives that exist to curb this behavior. Some turn to their veterinarian and ask for their cat to be declawed, believing the procedure removes only the claws. This is not the case, and declawing does much more harm than good.

Declawing, better described as de-knuckling, is a harmful and unnecessary amputation procedure that can cause chronic pain and discomfort in the cat. They may suffer from back pain and arthritis because removing the toe bones changes a cat's stance and gait. If humans were to receive a similar surgery, it would be like amputating our fingers at the first knuckle. Declawing can lead to chronic pain and discomfort in the cat, as well as back pain and arthritis because removing the toe bones changes a cat's stance and gait.

Cats who are declawed are more prone to behavior problems, such as biting, since they may be in pain, are frustrated and can't use their claws as defense. Cat bites, when serious and left untreated, can cause infection. It's not uncommon for someone to be hospitalized while recovering from a cat bite.

 *Declawing, better described as de-knuckling, has no place in ethical veterinary care."*

—**Dr. Jennifer Conrad**, founder and director of The Paw Project

Thankfully, an increasing number of veterinarians and animal hospitals have realized that declawing isn't just a medical procedure but a form of animal cruelty. They no longer offer the procedure to clients unless it's deemed medically necessary for the cat (such as to remove a tumor on a cat's toe). The attitude toward declawing has changed radically over the past few decades, thanks in large part to compassionate veterinarians and the veterinarian-led nonprofit The Paw Project. However, cats can't wait for the profession to end declawing on its own—laws are needed.

Declawing is prohibited or considered unethical in most countries, including Sweden, Brazil, Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and most of the European Union. In 2019, New York became the first U.S. state to ban declawing. Maryland, Massachusetts, the District of Columbia, and nearly two dozen cities and counties have also enacted bans, while Virginia has a partial ban. Citizens and cat lovers far and wide are engaging their communities and speaking up for our feline friends, and you can join them!

Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit is for “catvocates” (cat advocates), cat lovers and anyone who cares about the welfare of cats. If you're interested in stopping the declawing of cats but don't know where to start, this toolkit is perfect for you. Whether or not you have experience working on legislative issues, we will help you feel

empowered to make a change in your community through simple step-by-step actions and explanations about the process of banning the cruel practice of declawing where you live.

This toolkit will discuss why passing anti-declaw legislation is important and how to start the conversation about banning declawing in your city, county or state. We'll cover the basics, bill language, common arguments and more.

How to use this toolkit

Your first step is to read through the entire toolkit. Get a sense of what's involved and if you have the time to spearhead an effort to get a cat declawing ban introduced and passed in your city. Talk it over with family, friends and fellow advocates to gauge what support you have.

After you've decided to join the fight, contact us! Here at Humane World for Animals, we love to work with local advocates. If you want to lead the charge to ban declawing in your town, we can help provide you with supporting materials, give you pointers on how to talk with your elected officials, connect you with other advocates and more. With more states and cities interested in banning declawing, it's possible we're already working within your community! For state-level action, we want to make sure everyone is working together. You can find contact info below. We can't wait to hear from you!



PHOTO BY MEREDITH LEE/HUMANE WORLD FOR ANIMALS

Not the right time for legislation? That's OK!

After doing some research, you may find that it's not the right time to push for a declaw ban. That's OK! It won't always be possible to pass legislation in your community, maybe because the political climate isn't ideal or there are other factors at play, and certain states have passed preemption laws preventing local bans from happening. Raising awareness is still something you can do as an advocate! Start with friends and family. Having conversations and informing the people around you about the harm of declawing is a good first step. See pages 9-10 for tips on creating buzz and more actions you can take.

How to contact us:

Just send an email to companionanimals@humaneworld.org indicating in which city you'd like to spearhead a ban on cat declawing.

Why is anti-declaw legislation important?

We will end cat declawing through a combination of cultural change and legislation. By raising awareness among cat owners that declawing is cruel and exposing them to the many humane alternatives, we will decrease the demand. Peer-to-peer influence is changing attitudes in the veterinary field, and newer generations of veterinary professionals lean strongly against declawing. This in turn lends support for laws prohibiting declawing. These laws then signal that declawing is inhumane and unethical, further codifying the cultural change. It's all connected.

State-level declaw bans have the greatest impact. Success in passing a state law depends on many factors, such as sponsorship and support from legislators, coalition strength, community support and more. It can be a long process and take multiple legislative sessions to succeed. A local ordinance may be easier to pass and can be a good starting point to build support for a statewide effort. Multiple local bans can signal to state legislators that a state ban is important.

We recommend reading this guide and deciding at the end whether you want to work on passing a state law or start with a local ordinance, but a majority of this toolkit will focus on passing a local ordinance. Just remember, Humane World for Animals is here to guide you during the entire process. Whether it's at the state or local level, legislation that protects cats from being declawed is beneficial for many different reasons. Here are some key benefits:

Anti-declaw legislation helps cats.

- Declaw procedures are painful and take away a cat's ability to exhibit natural behaviors.
- Declawed cats often experience chronic pain and behavior issues such as biting or avoiding the litter box.

Anti-declaw legislation helps shelters and rescue organizations.

- Declawed cats who bite or don't use the litter box properly may have a higher chance of being relinquished to a shelter. These behaviors can make it more difficult to find that cat a new home.

Anti-declaw legislation helps human health.

- Cat bites carry a dangerously high infection risk to healthy and immunocompromised people alike.
- One in three patients with cat bites needs to be hospitalized, with two-thirds of those requiring surgical treatment such as stitches.

Declawing is still too common:

- Approximately 22% of cats in the U.S. are declawed.
- Around 1 in 5 U.S. cat owners have had their cats declawed.

Preparing your campaign

Research and learn the issue!

Before advocating publicly, it's important to get familiar with the issue. We've included some fact sheets, talking points, model language and graphics in the appendices that will help you learn more about ending declawing and become comfortable discussing it. The more you learn and talk about ending declawing, the more confident you'll feel as you continue to advocate for its end.

The Paw Project [website](#) also has a wealth of information on what declawing involves and why it should be banned.

Research declawing in your community

It can help to understand how prevalent declawing is in your community, especially if you're working to pass a local ban. Find out which veterinary clinics do and don't perform declaw surgery. Compile a list of clinics in your area and call them to ask if they offer declaw surgeries. Take notes on which say yes or no, or if they need more information.

The following veterinarians and clinics do not perform medically unnecessary declaw surgery:

- [Veterinarians on The Paw Project's list](#)
- [Fear Free Certified clinics](#)
- [Cat Friendly certified clinics](#)
- [Banfield Pet Hospitals](#)
- [VCA Animals Hospitals](#)
- [BluePearl Pet Hospitals](#)



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Understand the stakeholders

Veterinary stakeholders

The veterinary community is a major stakeholder in the battle to end declawing. Veterinary professionals serve as both the advocates and the opposition. In most cases, opposition comes from the veterinary medical association at the state level. It seems odd that a group of veterinarians would oppose a bill to help cats, right? Well, it's a bit complicated. It helps to know who's who when preparing to launch legislation to ban declawing.

State veterinary medical associations are membership organizations established at the state and sometimes regional level to promote and protect the state's veterinary industry. Think of them as industry



PHOTO BY HUMANE WORLD FOR ANIMALS

trade organizations often focused on the business side of the profession. Not all veterinarians belong to a state VMA, although these organizations often imply they speak for the entire profession when advocating for or against policies that impact animals. State VMAs often oppose any policy that they view as taking a decision away from a veterinarian and their client, such as a declaw ban. These trade groups would prefer the profession be self-regulated and especially don't want to be regulated by non-veterinarians. The state VMAs worry that if we begin banning procedures that they perform regularly, they will soon no longer be allowed to perform other procedures. Declawing, however, is an unnecessary procedure and is

usually done for the benefit of the owner and not the cat. Opposition may also come from those who worry that other common procedures similar to declawing, such as tail docking, ear cropping and devocalization, will be next.

Each state has a veterinary medical board, which is the government agency responsible for issuing veterinary licenses, investigating complaints and setting policies on the practice of veterinary medicine within the state. The state veterinary board has oversight of veterinarians, veterinary technicians and veterinary clinics, and thus is concerned about any legislation that impacts the profession.

Individual veterinarians are also important stakeholders. Regardless of whether they currently perform declaw surgeries, a ban can impact how they and their staff interact with clients and potential clients when the topic of declawing arises.

The Humane Veterinary Medical Alliance is a national professional veterinary medical association with a focus on animal welfare. HumaneVMA is the veterinary affiliate of Humane World for Animals and works closely with veterinary professionals to end declawing and enact declaw bans. HumaneVMA is a valuable resource to engage veterinary voices in efforts to ban declawing and has a team of volunteer [HumaneVMA state representatives](#) who often engage in these efforts at the state level.

Animal welfare stakeholders

A number of **national nonprofits** work to end nontherapeutic declawing across the United States. Humane World for Animals works closely with The Paw Project on both state and local declaw bans. The Paw Project has been dedicated to the issue of ending declawing procedures for over two decades and has a network of veterinarians helping to lead the effort. The Paw Project has achieved multiple successes, including writing and leading the support effort for the first local, county, provincial and statewide declaw bans in North America. You can read more about its work on its [website](#).

- Read Humane World for Animals's ["Why declawing is bad for your cat."](#)

Animal shelters and local humane societies are often looked at as experts on animal welfare in the community and can be important stakeholders in any animal-related ordinance. These organizations have a vested interest in protecting animals in your community and their opinion matters to lawmakers.

Build a coalition

Now that you know who the stakeholders are, assemble your coalition! Before lobbying for any legislation, it's best to have a coalition of groups or individuals in your community who support the issue and are available to lend their resources or expertise. When meeting with your coalition, find out what resources are available within the group, what responsibilities each person will take on and what your strategy will be for passing legislation.

Not sure who to include in your coalition? Here are some ideas:

Your local shelters, rescues and animal care organizations are a great place to start.

Shelter professionals have a strong stake in passing anti-declaw legislation since they often see firsthand the downsides of declawing. The negative behaviors often caused by declawing—biting and inappropriate litter box use—put declawed cats at risk of being surrendered to a shelter, which increases their chances of being euthanized. Shelter professionals also often speak regularly with the public about animal care issues such as declawing and likely include a provision in their adoption contracts prohibiting declawing. Chances are they have experience working with declawed cats and may be willing to share their stories. Reach out to the executive director or someone in a leadership position to discuss declawing.

If the conversation goes well, ask if they would be willing to meet with elected officials, raise awareness about declawing on social media, provide testimony if your future bill gets a hearing or advocate for a declawing ban in other ways. At the very least, ask if they're willing to list their organization on the [sign-on letter for shelter professionals](#). This sign-on letter, when presented to lawmakers, shows that a ban has strong support from local shelters or animal care services. Even if an organization doesn't want to participate in a bill hearing, signing the letter is a simple way it can show support for a ban.

Your local animal care and control agency may be assigned to enforce a declaw ban, so getting its buy-in is helpful. It's good for the agency to be aware of your efforts and on board with that responsibility. Local veterinary support is also vital. This is where your research on declawing in your community will come in handy.

Remember, this topic can be sensitive in the veterinary community, even among veterinarians who don't declaw, as they may be hesitant to support legislation regulating veterinary practices. Don't be discouraged if a vet doesn't want to get involved with legislation, even if they're opposed to declawing.

The Humane Veterinary Medical Alliance representative for your state is a good contact to make when first starting out. The Paw Project also has representatives across the country who can lend their expertise. These reps may be able to point you to other veterinarians who are willing to

Help us scratch out declawing!

Veterinarians, animal shelters and rescue organizations are important voices in passing declaw bans.

Veterinarians can sign HumaneVMA's statement to indicate support for banning cat declawing in their state [here](#).

Animal shelters and rescue groups can sign the Humane World for Animals support letter [here](#).

support your efforts. Once you contact us about your interest in pursuing a declaw ban, we'll get everyone connected.

Veterinarians and veterinary technicians may not have the bandwidth to be active on the coalition but could take other steps to support a ban. HumaneVMA offers a sign-on letter for veterinary professionals to show their support. If you find veterinarians, vet techs or those who work in the profession who are willing to sign the letter, you can ask them to sign [here](#).

Don't forget to include veterinarians and veterinary technicians who work in mobile or spay/neuter clinics; with horses, large animals or exotics; or in other settings. A veterinarian is a veterinarian, and any vet who will sign the anti-declaw statement or write a letter of support is helpful!

Human doctors and nurses can also be an asset to your coalition. Inevitably, a proponent of declawing will claim the procedure is needed to prevent people, particularly the elderly and immunocompromised, from being scratched. However, we know that declawed cats are more likely to bite, which is a far worse injury than a scratch. Human medical professionals can help set the record straight.

To grow a movement, you will want to bring in other people like yourself who are passionate about ending declawing. Having the support of more people will allow you to have a larger reach and will help convince lawmakers that something needs to be done. While you're networking with shelters and veterinarians, connect with local advocates who are willing to stand with you or, better yet, help you out. You can ask friends or family if they're willing to work with you while you champion this issue. If you volunteer at a shelter, that's a great place to connect with other animal advocates. Consider sharing a post on social media asking acquaintances if they're interested in working with you. Most people care about the welfare of cats, and many people like to get involved in their community but may not know how.

Once you identify your coalition, be sure to collect everyone's contact information so you can arrange a meeting or a call with all the parties involved. Having an agenda will help keep the meeting on track.

Gather community support and create a buzz!

Now that you've got a strong coalition, let's talk about creating a buzz in your community! Most of your neighbors probably aren't thinking about declawing or the need to end the practice. You need to get the conversation started so that lawmakers see that this is something their constituents are interested in. Here are some ideas to help get you started, with examples included in the appendices:

- Letters to the editor are simple but highly effective ways to get the attention of legislators in your community. They can also help get people talking about the issue. Brief (typically under 300 words) but powerful LTEs should focus on educating the reader and end with a call to action—something to motivate readers to take

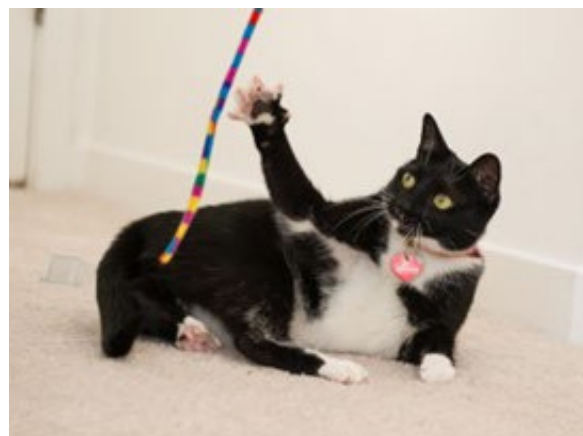


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action in the bill's favor. Before submitting, check the word limits as these vary by publication. [Here's](#) an article on how to write an effective LTE.

- Op-eds, which are opinion pieces that typically appear on a page opposite a newspaper's editorial page, can be a great tool to educate the public about the issue of declawing, especially if authored by a veterinarian who works in your community. These pieces are longer than LTEs (about 800 to 1,200 words) and are chosen by the editor of the publication. They're usually very popular with readers because they showcase strong opinions, usually about something happening in the area.
- Sharegraphics are simple, eye-catching ways to alert friends and others on social media about declawing, especially if there's a bill to talk about! The best part is that they're very easy to share once created.
- Pass out flyers and talk with potential allies at community events, such as adoption fairs and other animal-themed activities. Include an action such as calling or emailing lawmakers or signing a petition in support of the declaw ban.
- Ask local businesses to support the ban. Pet supply stores, grooming salons and pet-sitting services are good options. But don't limit yourself—ask any potentially cat-friendly business to add their name to your list of supporters.
- Get creative! Consider writing a blog post about why declawing is harmful. Or ask a veterinarian who doesn't declaw if you can interview them and share your conversation on social media.

Get media attention

Banning declawing is a great topic for local media. Once your bill is introduced, reach out to your local television and print news outlets to pitch a story about the campaign. Once you have a legislator to sponsor the bill to ban cat declawing, you'll want to include them in your media outreach and potentially collaborate with their office on messaging. Find tips on how to contact the media [here](#).

Some things to consider including in your pitch:

- Basic facts about what declawing is and why it's not good for cats
- Details about the bill to ban declawing, including who the sponsor is, the bill number and what stage it's at in the legislative process
- Stories about individual cats who were harmed by declawing; these can be from cat owners, veterinarians or animal shelter staff
- Opportunities to film cats, either those who have been declawed or cats whose claws will be protected by the legislation
- Quotes from local veterinarians, animal shelters or other local experts
- A call to action, if applicable; leaving readers with an action they can take can help rally support

Getting a local declaw ban introduced and passed

While you're working on creating buzz around the topic of declawing, start developing a strategy for a declaw ban. You'll need to familiarize yourself with the legislative process in your locality, identify animal-friendly lawmakers and start lobbying to get the bill introduced.

Understand the process

Your local government most likely has a website that will tell you a lot about your city council or county commission, including who the members are, how to contact them, and when and where they meet. Attending council meetings and reading over agendas can help you understand the process. In general, a council member will introduce a bill at a hearing, then a public hearing will be set where people can testify for or against the measure, and finally a vote will be taken. The vote may happen the same day as the hearing, or it may happen at a later date. Depending on the makeup of your city or county council, the bill may be heard by a committee, which will then decide if the bill goes to the full council for a vote. If the bill passes, it likely needs to be signed by the mayor before becoming law.

 *A lot of people aren't aware that declawing a cat is actually a really cruel and mutilating surgery. It's not just doing a little manicure, but actually removes the first knuckle, the first bone from their paw."*

—**Maryland state Senator Cheryl Kagan**, D-Montgomery County

Find a sponsor

The first step to getting a bill introduced is finding a sponsor, ideally someone who believes in the cause and will champion the effort. There may be a council member well known as animal-friendly who you could approach, or you can start with the person who represents the area where you live.

Once you decide who to start with, call their office and begin a conversation about declawing. Ask for a meeting with their staff so you can introduce yourself and state your case.

If they're extremely interested, ask if they would introduce legislation to ban declawing. If they say no, regroup and identify the next council member to approach.

Once you find a sponsor, consider it a successful first step on this journey. There's still much to be done, and it's important to stay engaged with the sponsor throughout the entire process. Communicate regularly with the sponsor as the bill gets introduced, scheduled for a hearing and voted on.

It's important to make the connection that declawing is animal cruelty. Many lawmakers, regardless of party affiliation, don't like to imagine that animal cruelty is occurring in their communities and would agree that protecting animals is an important bipartisan issue. **Tip:** If attending the meeting in person, bring a fact sheet or talking points for their office. If you're meeting virtually, send them via email prior to the meeting. If you're asked any questions you don't know the answers to, take note and let them know you will follow up with answers. It's OK if you don't have all the answers right away.

Have the bill drafted

Provide your sponsor with the example declaw ban language provided in Appendix 4. The sponsor will need to work with council staff to draft a bill based on the sample language that fits the conventions of your city and state. Request to review the bill draft before it's introduced. If you haven't already, it's important to reach out to Humane World for Animals or The Paw Project at this stage so we can review the language of the bill as well.

When crafting laws, it's vital to exclude any potential loopholes. Loopholes may be inadvertently created in bill drafting, or they may be explicit. For example, lawmakers may be asked to include an exemption for human health (such as if an elderly person with thin skin wanted to have their cat declawed to avoid being scratched, a veterinarian could be permitted to do so). Humane World for Animals and The Paw Project

do not support these types of exemptions, and their position is supported by statements from human health authorities, including the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health.

The recommended declaw ban language prohibits nontherapeutic declawing but does allow for it when there's a medical condition in the cat's paw. Declawing isn't allowed for convenience in keeping or handling the cat, or to ensure a cat can stay in a home.

Line up co-sponsors and votes

Adding co-sponsors to the bill demonstrates that it has support. Ask the bill sponsor to solicit co-sponsors or suggest who you should engage about signing on. **Tip for state bills:** Having bipartisan sponsorship of your bill could be very helpful for its longevity. It's not always necessary, but it does show that animal issues are bipartisan issues.

Once the bill is introduced, you should plan to meet with other council members. This is something you can divide up among coalition



PHOTO BY MEREDITH LEE/HUMANE WORLD FOR ANIMALS

members or do in groups that include, if possible, someone from the district that the council member represents. Follow the steps above for meeting with potential sponsors. It's a good idea to leave each council member with a fact sheet explaining what declawing is, as anti-declaw bills can be confusing to many people unfamiliar with cat anatomy or cat behavior. We can help you customize a fact sheet for your bill.

If possible, try to get a commitment from the other committee members or council members to vote yes on the ban. If you don't get a commitment, you'll want to follow up with any additional information that may sway their vote. You'll also want to generate calls to their office, particularly from their constituents, asking them to support the ban. Keep track of who is voting for the ban; who has stated their opposition; and for those who are undecided or noncommittal, which way they're leaning before the vote.

Attend hearings and testify in support

If your bill gets a hearing, it's important to show up to support it! Once you know the date and time, let your coalition and other supporters know. Encourage them to show up to support the bill. If you're part of a larger coalition, make sure you and anyone willing to provide testimony is registered ahead of time (if required).

There are two ways to provide testimony: written and oral. You usually don't have to choose one or the other, so you can do both.

Written testimony can provide detailed arguments for the bill with statistics and quotes from scientific studies, stories about declawed cats and other background information as attachments. Written testimony is a great option for those who can't attend the hearing in person, such as veterinarians with busy schedules. Community members can also submit simple written testimony stating their support for the bill. You'll need to know where to send written testimony and share that information with your coalition and supporters.

Oral testimony should cover the main points. Oral testimony is often limited, with each speaker getting two or three minutes. Be sure to find out the time limits before the hearing. It helps to practice your testimony so you can get in all your points in the time allotted. Time can go by quickly!

Below are some tips for providing strong testimony at a hearing:

- Coordinate ahead of time with your coalition. It's likely that your coalition includes a diverse array of occupations. Divide up key points so supporters are speaking to their strengths.
- If you have representation from the sheltering community, ask them to speak on their experiences with declawed cats; these could include receiving declawed cats from owners relinquishing them for specific reasons or trying to adopt out declawed cats who have trouble using the litter box.
- Has anyone in your coalition owned a declawed cat? Perhaps they were bitten or struggled with vet bills due to rehabilitation for the cat after they were declawed. Having them share their experience will have an emotional impact.
- Include veterinarians and veterinary technicians. This one is crucial. Because the issue of declawing involves veterinary professionals, you'll want representation from the side that supports a declaw ban. Veterinarians or veterinary technicians should discuss the harmful effects that declawing has on cats, immediately after surgery and for the rest of their lives.

- If you have any medical doctors with human patients in your coalition, they can speak to the effects that cat bites have on human health.
- If you have a lot of supporters at an in-person hearing, instead of having everyone testify individually, ask everyone in support to stand up during your testimony.
- Overall, it's important to drive home to your audience the main message that declawing is harmful for cats and human health. Try not to repeat information that has already been brought up by someone else in your coalition; be as brief as possible while still delivering your message.

Anticipate opposition and criticism

Often, there is time reserved for questions after you present your oral testimony. If a committee member or legislator has concerns or questions, they may ask you a few questions. You can find a list of the most commonly used arguments against anti-declawing bills in the FAQ included in Appendix 6. Studying this list, as well as knowing the issue thoroughly, will help you prepare for these questions. If you're stumped by a question, take a breath. Let whoever is asking know that you'd like to get back to them with the most accurate answer, or indicate if there's someone else in the audience who may be able to answer the question. Don't lie or fake your way through an answer because this could weaken your credibility.

In some cases, lawmakers may only address their questions to the sponsor. This means it's important that you prepare the sponsor with all the talking points. It's also important that the sponsor doesn't accept amendments to the bill that may seem reasonable on the surface but in reality would create loopholes large enough to negate any protections for cats. You'll need to have this conversation with your sponsor ahead of time.



PHOTO BY ANN ARBOR MILLER/HUMANE WORLD FOR ANIMALS

The vote: Celebrate or regroup

Not all hearings end with an immediate vote, so be sure to follow your bill until it does receive a vote. And keep following the bill until it completes all the steps needed to become law.

You've won!

Congratulations! You've secured a win and, more importantly, have helped cats in your city, county or state. You deserve to celebrate. Before you do, it's a good idea to thank your sponsors and other legislators who helped with passage of your bill. You can thank them publicly on social platforms, or you can write a letter. You can also share the good news via social media. Consider using a sharegraphic—we've included a few templates in Appendix 3.



PHOTO BY MOLLY TAMULEVICH/HUMANE WORLD FOR ANIMALS

Regroup

If your bill didn't pass, that's OK! Look back on how far it did come and consider that time as an educational opportunity. Get together with your coalition for a post-hearing debrief. Discuss what went well and what you would like to change if you decide to keep working on this issue. Not many bills are passed the first session they're introduced.

Take aim at state declaw bans

This toolkit has mostly focused on passing bans at a local level, but this section will focus on working at the state level. Passing declaw bans at the state level is a heavier lift than the local ordinances. That means more advocates are needed to build the support required.

If you want to work toward a statewide ban, let us know. We're actively working to ban declawing in a number of states. If you live in one of these states, we want you to join our efforts! If you live in a state without active legislation, it's likely we're having conversations, and coalitions may just be forming. We need you for those states, too!

We love working with advocates!

We will help you throughout the entire process. Just send an email to us at companionanimals@humaneworld.org indicating in which city you'd like to spearhead a ban on cat declawing.

Appendix 1: Letters to the editor

Example 1

Dear Editor: Declawing a cat, in other words amputating your cat's last bone in each of their toes, is in most cases, an unnecessary and inhumane medical procedure that is still being performed here in the U.S. today. It entails the use of a scalpel or guillotine clipper, the same tool used to trim dog nails, to amputate the bone or the use of an intense laser to cut through tissue. Both methods are known to cause long-lasting physical problems in cats such as nerve damage, bone spurs, back pain and arthritis. This procedure is also associated with cats developing adverse behaviors such as increased biting, aggression, compulsive grooming and litter box avoidance. With all of these known damaging effects of declawing, why is it still being performed? The most common misconception is that it is the only way to protect people and/or furniture from being scratched. This is untrue, and there are a significant number of alternative humane methods to prevent scratching, such as positive reinforcement training, nail caps and just providing acceptable items for cats to scratch (e.g., scratching posts). Simple right?

In other countries, including Sweden, Brazil, Germany, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, nontherapeutic declawing is considered unethical and is illegal. We are lagging behind in the U.S. where only a few states have banned the declawing of cats. Here in [your location], we now have an opportunity to make a difference and save our cats from being subjected to this brutal procedure. Bill [number], which would prohibit inhumane declawing, is now being considered. You can help by contacting your [city council member, county commissioner] and asking them to support this measure to protect cats.

Example 2

Dear Editor:

I am proud that we have a city council that cares about the welfare of animals in our city. As a [staff member, volunteer] at [animal shelter, veterinary clinic], I want to express my gratitude to [your town] City Council for considering a ban on cruel cat declawing. Too many times we have seen cats subjected to lifelong pain because their owners decide to declaw them. When they enter our [shelter, clinic], these declawed cats often come with behavioral issues and have a difficult time using the litterbox, which [decreases their chances of adoption/can lead their owners to surrender them to a shelter]. My coworkers and I are relieved that [your town] may soon prohibit declawing, and we hope we'll see fewer and fewer cats without their claws.

Appendix 2: Op-eds

Tips for a successful op-ed

An op-ed (which stands for “opposite the editorial page”) is extremely effective in educating the public. These pieces are longer than LTEs (about 800 to 1,200 words) and are chosen by the editor of the publication. They’re usually very popular with readers because they showcase strong opinions, usually about something happening in the area. Keep these points in mind when writing an op-ed:

- Start strong; you want to hook your readers right away and keep them reading.
- Include facts to support your opinion.
- Relate your argument to the everyday reader: Why should they care?
- Leave them with a call to action: What can they do about it?



PHOTO BY MEREDITH LEE/HUMANE WORLD FOR ANIMALS

Here’s a sample of a published op-ed written by a Humane World for Animals staff member:

For a long time, Americans considered declawing a routine option to prevent unwanted scratching by their cats, and many think it’s just a simple surgery. However, the truth is this antiquated procedure is invasive, cruel, and can cause both behavioral and medical issues for cats. Maryland’s law prohibiting the practice has just gone into effect, and it’s a good time for Virginians who care about cats to consider the merits of a similar prohibition.

Declawing is not simply a nail trim. This surgery involves the amputation of the last bone of each toe of the front paws. If performed on a human being, it would be like cutting off each finger at the top knuckle. People often seek out a declaw procedure to prevent their cat from scratching. However, scratching is a natural behavior for cats. They scratch for a number of reasons: to remove the dead husks from their claws, to mark territory and even to stretch their muscles!

Contrary to widespread belief, declawing does not provide any benefit for the cat—often, it’s the exact opposite. One in five cats has long-term complications from declaw surgery, and 50% have immediate post-surgical complications. Medical complications can include pain in the paw, infection, tissue necrosis (tissue death), lameness and back pain. Removing claws changes the way a cat’s foot meets the ground and can also cause pain similar to wearing an uncomfortable pair of shoes. There can also be a regrowth of improperly removed claws, nerve damage and bone spurs.

Nor does declawing guarantee a cat will remain in his or her home. 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. These are some of the most common reasons for the relinquishment of

cats to shelters. Moreover, both the Feline Veterinary Medical Association and the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association assert that 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.”

Declawing is also unnecessary to protect human health. The National Institutes of Health, U.S. 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 immunocompromised patients, including those with HIV. In fact, declawing may be more dangerous due to the documented increased biting behavior of declawed cats.

There are a number of humane, noninvasive ways to deal with unwanted scratching. Keeping cat claws trimmed, providing a variety of stable scratching posts and boards, as well as using plastic nail caps are all great alternatives to unnecessary surgery. Declawing should be reserved only for those rare cases in which a cat has a medical problem that would warrant such surgery, such as a tumor or infection in the nail bed. It can no longer be treated as an option for the convenience of the cat owner, and Virginia would do well to join New York and Maryland in taking this stand.

Appendix 3: Sample sharegraphics

There are many tools available to help you make social media graphics, from Canva to PowerPoint. Check out some of our examples below for inspiration. All you need are cute, eye-catching pictures, bright colors to catch attention and a strong call to action.



Appendix 4: Example ordinances

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Section 633.25 – Declawing of cats; prohibited procedures and conduct.

(a) *Definitions*

(1) *Cat*. Any member of the Felidae family (both domestic and nondomestic felines).

(2) As used in this section the term “Declawing” means any of the following:

(a) An onychectomy, dactylectomy, phalangectomy, partial digital amputation, or any other surgical procedure by which a portion of a cat’s paw is amputated to remove the cat’s claw.

(b) A tendonectomy or another surgical procedure by which the tendons of a cat’s limbs, paws, or toes are cut or modified so that the cat’s claws cannot be extended.

(c) Any other method of permanently or irreversibly preventing the normal functioning of a feline’s claws.

(3) “Therapeutic purpose” means the necessity of addressing the physical medical condition of a cat, such as an existing or recurring illness, infection, disease, injury, or abnormal condition of the cat which compromises the cat’s health. The term does not include a cosmetic or aesthetic reason or reasons of convenience for keeping or handling the cat.

(b) *Prohibition*. A person may not perform a declawing by any means on a cat within the City of Pittsburgh unless the procedure is necessary for a therapeutic purpose.

(c) Any person who violates § 633.25 is subject to civil penalty of up to five hundred dollars (\$500.00), plus costs, for each violation. Each incident in which a cat is declawed or partially declawed in violation of § 633.25 constitutes a separate violation.

Takoma, Washington

17.02.155 Cat Declawing.

A. Except as provided in subsection B. of this section, it shall be unlawful for any person to perform a procedure that results in the partial or complete declawing (partial digital amputation) of a cat in the City of Tacoma.

B. Notwithstanding the restrictions set forth in subsection A. of this section, a person may perform a procedure to declaw a cat only if:

1. The person performing the procedure is a licensed veterinarian; and
2. The procedure has a therapeutic purpose.

C. As used in this section:

1. “Declaw” means to surgically remove or alter the claw or claws of a cat by a surgical procedure such as onychectomy or tendonectomy, in order to prevent the normal functioning of a cat’s paws or toes. Tendonectomy is a surgical procedure where tendons to the cat’s toes are severed in order to prevent their normal function. Declawing does not include the trimming of a nonviable claw husk or placing nonpermanent nail caps.

2. “Therapeutic purpose” means a medically necessary procedure to address an existing or recurring infection, disease, injury, or abnormal condition in the claws, nail bed, or toe bone, that jeopardizes the cat’s health. “Therapeutic purpose” does not include a procedure performed for a cosmetic or aesthetic purpose or to make the cat more convenient to keep or handle.

Appendix 5: Testimony

Address your audience appropriately and thank them for their time.

“Hello (President, Representative, Senator, Councilperson, etc.), thank you for the opportunity to address you today about cat declawing/BILL#”

Introduce yourself and the relevance for your testimony.

“My name is X, and I am a (vet tech, advocate, veterinarian, owner of a declawed cat, etc.).”

Be clear about what you want.

“I strongly support a ban on cat declawing and respectfully ask that you vote in favor of this bill.”

Tell a story.

If you have a compelling story about working with or owning a declawed cat, this can be extremely effective! Be sure to center your story around the implications of the cat being declawed. You can then include some facts that are relevant to your argument supporting a ban on declawing.

No story? Stick to the facts.

“If passed, our community would join a rapidly growing number of communities taking a stand against this inhumane practice.

Arguments in favor of declawing often center around the desire to prevent unwanted scratching of either furniture or people. Amputation is an extreme response to what can be addressed with regular nail trimming, a variety of scratching posts and a better understanding of feline behavior. Moreover, declawed cats are at a greater risk of developing litter box aversion, biting and aggressive behavior, and other adverse behaviors more serious than the ones the amputations were meant to prevent.

The veterinary community is increasingly opposed to declawing. [This is a good point to share information you’ve learned from your research on local veterinary clinics that don’t offer cat declawing.]

However, we can’t continue to wait for the veterinary profession to end declawing on its own. These amputations are still too commonly practiced, and cat owners are often not made aware of the high risk of permanent adverse effects on cats or of the procedures’ controversies—including that many veterinarians won’t amputate a cat’s toes unless there is a valid medical need.”

End on a strong note.

Before wrapping up, thank your audience once more for the chance to speak and reiterate your request for them to vote in favor of the ban.

Tips for effective testimony

- If you have multiple people providing oral testimony in favor of the ban, coordinate what you’re saying so there’s no overlap and all the major points are made.
- Be respectful of any time limits for oral testimony. If you go over the time allotted, you may be cut off, and the remainder of your testimony won’t be heard.

Appendix 6: Talking points and FAQ

Declawing is no trip to the spa for a mani-pedi. It involves amputating the last part of a cat's 10 front toes—and some surgeries also involve the back toes.

- A comparison in humans would be cutting off a person's fingers and toes at the last joints.
- One in five cats have long-term complications from declaw surgery (50% experience immediate post-surgical complications). One-third of declawed cats manifest behavioral problems after declawing.
- The veterinary community is increasingly opposed to declawing. The FelineVMA, American Animal Hospital Association, Canadian Veterinary Medical Association and HumaneVMA are all opposed. The largest veterinary hospital systems in the U.S.—VCA, Banfield and BluePearl—will not perform elective declaw procedures on cats.

Scratching is a natural behavior for cats. It removes the dead husks from their claws, marks territory—both visually and with scent glands on their paws—and stretches their muscles. Scratching is important for a cat's physical and mental well-being.

- Declawing isn't done for the benefit of the cat, as it prevents the cat from performing natural feline behaviors.
- What is natural scratching behavior for a cat is often considered misbehavior by humans, especially when furniture or other household objects are damaged in the process.

We can't continue to wait for the veterinary profession to stop declawing on its own. Declawing is still too commonly practiced, and cat owners are often not made aware of the high risk of permanent adverse effects or why declawing is controversial.

- Around one in five cat owners in the U.S. have declawed their cats. Approximately 22% of U.S. pet cats have undergone a declaw surgery, according to a 2023 survey conducted by The Harris Poll on behalf of Humane World for Animals.
- The number of cats declawed in the U.S. hasn't changed significantly in the last 20 years. A 2000 survey from 2000 estimated that 24.4% of cats were declawed at the time.

Frequently asked questions

What is declawing?

- Declawing is the amputation of the last bone of each toe on a cat's paw. It would be like cutting off your fingers at the last knuckles. It's also called onychectomy.
- Declawing of the front paws is the most common procedure, though declawing all four paws also occurs.
- The standard method of declawing is amputating with a scalpel or guillotine clipper—the same tool commonly used to trim a dog's nails.
- The wounds are closed with stitches or surgical glue, and the feet are bandaged.
- Another declaw method is laser surgery, in which a small, intense beam of light cuts through tissue by heating and vaporizing it. Both methods can cause lasting physical problems for the cat.

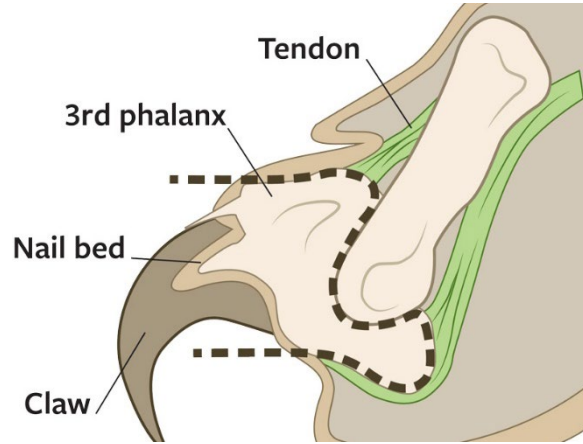


ILLUSTRATION BY RACHEL STERN/HUMANE WORLD FOR ANIMALS

What is a tendonectomy?

- During a tendonectomy, the tendon that controls the claw in each toe is severed.
- The cat retains their claws but can't control them or extend them to scratch.
- This procedure is associated with a high incidence of abnormally thick claw growth. As a result, more frequent and challenging nail trims are required to prevent the cat's claws from snagging on people, carpet, furniture and drapes, or from growing into the cat's paw pads.
- Because of complications, a cat who has been tendonectomized may require declawing later.
- Although a tendonectomy isn't an actual amputation, a 1998 study published in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* found the incidence of bleeding, lameness and infection was similar between tendonectomy and declawing.

Why should declawing (and tendonectomy) practices be banned?

- Declawing can cause nerve damage, phantom pain, pain from retained bone fragments, infection or tissue necrosis (tissue death).
- Improperly removed claws can regrow, causing nerve damage and bone spurs. Additional corrective surgery may be needed to alleviate some of the pain.
- Declawing can also cause back pain and lameness and contribute to arthritis. Removing claws changes the way a cat's paws meet the ground and can cause pain similar to wearing an uncomfortable pair of shoes. This can lead to chronic issues with joints and arthritis.

- Declawing can lead to pain-related behavior issues such as biting and avoiding the litter box. These behaviors increase the risk of the cat being evicted from the home.
- For several days after surgery, shredded newspaper is typically used in the litter box to prevent litter from irritating declawed paws. This unfamiliar litter substitute, accompanied by pain when scratching in the box, may lead cats to stop using the litter box. Litter box avoidance can become a chronic problem for declawed cats.
- For these reasons and more, a growing number of veterinary groups oppose declawing.

Where do veterinarians stand on declawing and declaw bans?

- The Feline Veterinary Medical Association [strongly opposes declawing](#).
- [International Cat Care](#) and the iCatCare Veterinary Society consider declawing an act of mutilation and unethical.
- The American Animal Hospital Association strongly [opposes](#) declawing.
- The American Veterinary Medical Association [discourages](#) declawing of cats.
- The Humane Veterinary Medical Alliance strongly [opposes](#) declawing.
- [Banfield](#) Pet Hospital, BluePearl Pet Hospital and [VCA](#) Animal Hospitals—all large veterinary clinic chains—do not support or perform declawing.

Isn't declawing necessary to protect people from cat scratches?

- Infectious disease specialists don't recommend declawing. The National Institutes of Health, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Infectious Diseases Society of America jointly state that declawing is "not advised" to protect the health of even severely immunocompromised patients, including those with HIV.
- No longer able to defend themselves with their claws, cats may resort to biting. Declawed cats have been documented to bite more frequently. Cat bites carry a dangerously high infection risk to healthy and immunocompromised people alike, often requiring hospitalization. Thus, declawing a cat puts people at a higher risk of injury than if the cat were not declawed.
- Handling cats properly, understanding how to avoid being scratched, and claw trimming can reduce the risk of injury from scratches.

Won't people relinquish their cats for scratching if declawing is prohibited?

- Concerns that more cats will be surrendered to shelters if declawing is banned are unfounded. There is no data to support that cats with destructive scratching behaviors are more likely to be euthanized, abandoned or relinquished.
- A study of British Columbia, Canada, shelters in the year before and after a province-wide declaw ban was enacted shows no impact on either shelter intake of cats or on cat euthanasia. Examination of available intake data for shelters in cities where declaw bans have been enacted also shows no negative impact of declaw bans on shelter cat intake/euthanasia.

- Declawing is no guarantee that a cat will remain in the home, as declawed cats are frequently relinquished to animal shelters and rescue groups. Declawing isn't a justifiable alternative to relinquishment or rehoming.
- Most people love their cats; when provided with information, services and resources on how to humanely deal with misplaced scratching behavior, they'll choose to keep their pets. It's incumbent upon the veterinary profession and the animal welfare community to ensure that cat owners have access to these helpful resources.

Why do cats scratch things in the first place?

- Scratching is normal cat behavior; it helps cats stretch, remove dead husks from their claws and add their scent to their surroundings.
- In the wild, cats use their claws to catch prey, defend themselves and escape from predators. At home, that translates to behaviors such as attacking toys and climbing to favorite perches.
- Because they have scent glands on their paws, scratching is also a way of scent-marking their territory, which helps them feel at home and secure. Cats will scratch on furniture and rugs when they aren't provided with more acceptable alternatives.

Instead of declawing, how can you prevent your cat from scratching furniture?

- Cats tend to scratch furniture because they prefer to scratch tall, sturdy objects that allow them to dig their nails in and get a good grip.
- Offer sturdy scratching posts and boards made from different materials such as carpet, sisal, wood and cardboard to give your cat options.
- Try both vertical posts and horizontal or angled boards to learn your cat's preference. They may like both!
- Place scratching posts near the objects you don't want scratched.
- Use toys and catnip or honeysuckle spray to entice your cat to use the posts and boards.
- Steer clear of cheap vertical posts with a lightweight base. If a post is wobbly or topples over when your cat uses it, they'll never use it again!
- While your cat is learning, cover off-limits furniture with a tight-fitting sheet or use double-sided sticky tape.

How can I prevent my cat from scratching me or people in the family?

- Make sure to engage in regular play with your cat. This can help your cat burn off energy as well as satisfy their desire to catch "prey."
- Don't use your hands to play with your cat—use an appropriate toy or wand.
- To prevent accidental scratches, keep your cat's claws trimmed using trimmers designed for cats. Make nail trims a calm, weekly routine.
- Talk to your veterinarian about soft plastic caps that are glued over your cat's nails.
- If your cat intentionally scratches people out of fear or aggression, consult your veterinarian, a trainer or behaviorist for guidance on behavior modification using positive reinforcement.

Why don't we support allowing for a human health exemption in cat declawing bans?

Exceptions to allow for declawing other than for a therapeutic purpose for the cat are ill-advised.

Declawing cats for human health isn't recommended by any leading human health expert or organization and isn't supported by scientific literature.

Declawing cats can put people at greater risk of harm from biting than scratching, especially those who have compromised immune systems or other medical conditions. The documented increased biting behavior of declawed cats can lead to more severe disease in people than cat scratches, putting people at a higher risk of injury than if the cats weren't declawed.

- Declawed cats have [4.5 times higher odds](#) of increased biting behavior.
- Cat bites carry a dangerously high infection risk to healthy and immunocompromised people alike, often requiring hospitalization. Between [30%-40% of patients](#) with cat bites are hospitalized for treatment.

No human health organization recommends declawing.

- Infectious disease specialists don't recommend declawing to patients who have cats. The [medical and veterinary literature](#) pertaining to zoonotic diseases doesn't support human health as a reason to declaw a cat.
- The National Institutes of Health, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Infectious Diseases Society of America jointly state that declawing of cats is ["not advised"](#) to protect the health of even severely immunocompromised patients, including those with HIV.
- Declawing is [not recommended](#) to prevent cat scratch disease (also known as cat scratch fever), according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Since the bacteria that causes the disease is found in flea dirt, routine flea prevention treatment is recommended.
- The American Cancer Society [recommends](#) those undergoing cancer treatment avoid bites and scratches by keeping pet's nails trimmed, cleaning any scratches that occur, and keeping pets healthy and up to date on vaccinations and flea and tick prevention. Declawing isn't recommended.
- Declawing isn't recommended for the cats of patients on blood thinners or hemophiliacs: "Hemophiliacs also aren't especially vulnerable to minor cuts like cat scratches, even though their blood-clotting ability is compromised, according to the [National Hemophilia Foundation](#) [now called the National Bleeding Disorders Foundation]."

Where has declawing been banned?

As of April 2025

Declaw ban state laws

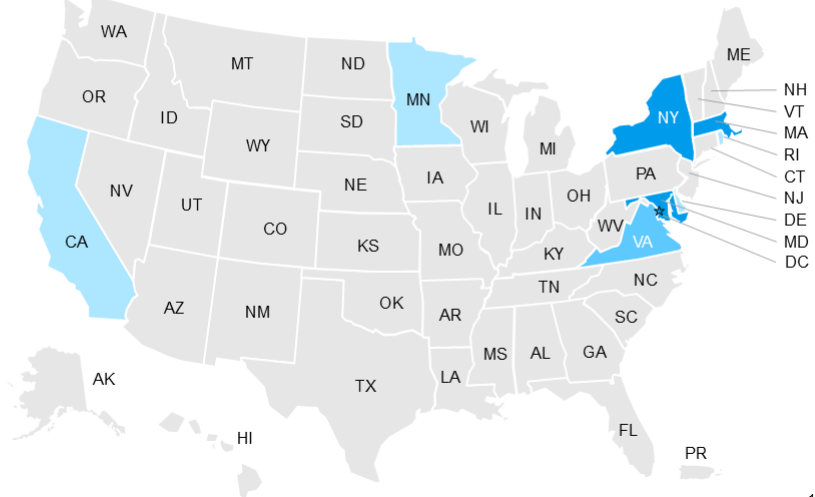
U.S. cat declawing bans

3 states (NY, MD, MA) plus the District of Columbia have enacted bans against nontherapeutic declawing

1 state (VA) restricts declawing with exemptions for certain owners

4 states (CA, RI, DE, MN) prohibit landlords from requiring tenants to declaw their cats

- Statewide declaw ban
- Partial statewide declaw ban
- Rental protections



1

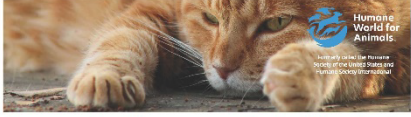
Declaw ban ordinances

- California:** West Hollywood, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Burbank, Santa Monica, Berkeley, Beverly Hills, Culver City
- Colorado:** Denver
- Florida:** Volusia County
- Illinois:** Evanston, Downers Grove, Buffalo Grove (resolution)
- Missouri:** St. Louis City, St. Louis County
- Pennsylvania:** Pittsburgh, Allentown, Etna, Easton, Forks
- Texas:** Austin
- Washington:** Tacoma
- Wisconsin:** Madison, Marshfield (resolution)

Appendix 7: Additional resources

Fact sheet: Support a ban on cat declawing

We can customize fact sheets to support your cat declaw ban ordinance.



Support a ban on cat declawing

Ten reasons to ban cat declawing

1. **Declawing is elective amputation of a cat's toes.** It's never done for the benefit of the cat's health or well being.
2. **Declawing is painful,** often for life. Nerves, tendons and bone are severed. Some cats never fully recover and experience nerve damage, phantom pain, pain from retained bone fragments, infection or tissue necrosis.
3. **Cats need to scratch.** Scratching is normal cat behavior; it helps cats stretch, remove dead husks from their claws and adds their scent to their surroundings.
4. **Declawing is like wearing ill-fitting shoes, forever.** Toe amputations shift how cats walk which can lead to lameness and chronic issues with joints and arthritis.
5. **Declawing cats put people at harm.** Declawed cats are more likely to bite, and cat bites carry a dangerously high infection risk. Declawing is not recommended by any human health agency.
6. **Declawing doesn't guarantee a cat will remain in the home.** Pain declaw-related behaviors, like biting and avoiding the litter box, increase the risk of the cat being surrendered.
7. **Declawing is not performed in most countries of the world.**
8. **A growing number of U.S. vets agree and oppose non-therapeutic declawing.** The Feline VMA and the Humane VMA are opposed. The largest veterinary hospital systems in the U.S.—VCA, Banfield, and Blue Pearl—will not perform elective declawing.
9. **Declawing is still too commonly practiced and not only as a last resort.** An estimated 20-24% of pet cats in the U.S. have been declawed. Declawing is not a justifiable alternative to rehoming.
10. **There are alternatives.** Scratching posts, regular nail trims, behavior training, nail caps and double-sided tape applied to furniture are all viable and humane alternatives to declawing.

Take Action!

End Cat Declawing Toolkit: Are you interested in stopping the declawing of cats but don't know where to start? This toolkit is for you. Aimed at passing and declaw legislation at the local level and supporting statewide bans, the End Cat Declawing Advocacy Toolkit provides a step-by-step guide for both experienced policy advocates and those new to policy work.

Scan this QR code to access the toolkit.



Photo: Adam Osborn/Humane World for Animals

Declawing is bad for cats

One in five cats has long-term complications from declaw surgery and 50% have immediate post-surgical complications. One in three cats manifest at least one behavioral problem after declawing.

Declawing explained

Declawing is the amputation of the last bone of each toe on a cat's paw. Other terms for declawing include onychectomy, dactylomyia, phalangectomy and partial digital amputation.

Declawing of the front paws is most common though declawing all four paws also occurs.

The standard method of declawing is amputating with a scalpel or guillotine clipper—the same tool commonly used to trim a dog's nails. The wounds are closed with stitches or surgical glue, and the feet are bandaged.

Another declaw method is laser surgery, in which a small, intense beam of light cuts through tissue by heating and vaporizing it. Both methods can cause lasting physical problems for the cat.

Tendonectomy is a procedure where the tendon that controls the claw in each toe is severed. The cat retains their claws but can't extend them or extend them to scratch. More frequent and challenging nail trims are required to prevent the cat's claws from snagging on people, carpet and furniture, or from growing into the cat's paw pads. The incidence of bleeding, lameness and infection is similar between tendonectomy and declawing.

Improperly removed claws can regrow, causing nerve damage and bone spurs. Additional corrective surgery may alleviate some of the pain.



For more information, visit: humanevet.org

Photo: Judy Farnsworth/IFAWC

Declawing is bad for people

The National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Infectious Disease Society of America jointly stated that declawing is "not advised" to protect the health of even severely immune-compromised patients.

20% of cats in the U.S. are declawed. This number has not changed in the last decade indicating that while fewer veterinarians perform the surgery, the prevalence persists.



Declawing is not the last resort

There is no evidence that cats with destructive behavior are more likely to be euthanized, abandoned or relinquished to an animal shelter. No jurisdiction that has enacted a declaw ban has experienced an increase in cat relinquishment or euthanasia. The decision of whether or not to declaw should not be impacted by these considerations. Rehoming should be considered a viable alternative to declawing.

Handling cats properly, understanding how to avoid being scratched, the use of temporary nail caps and regular claw trimming can reduce the risk of injury from scratches.

Declaw bans are expanding

Declawing of cats for non-therapeutic reasons is prohibited or considered unethical practice in most countries around the globe.

Declawing is banned in New York, Maryland, the District of Columbia and Massachusetts. Virginia has a partial ban on declawing.

Many municipalities and counties also ban declawing.



Cat declawing

Why it's a bad idea for your cat

Scratching is a natural behavior for cats. It removes the dead husks from their claws, marks territory (both visually and with scent glands in their paws) and stretches their muscles. Unfortunately, scratching is often considered misbehavior by a cat's human guardian, especially when furniture or other household objects are damaged.

Alternatives to declawing:

1. Scratching posts offer an alternative to scratching on furniture. Cats can be trained to use these fully easily, especially if sprayed with attractive scents, such as catnip and feline pheromones.
2. Spry furniture with an aversive scent, such as citrus, which cats don't like.
3. Keep your cat's nails trimmed. Cats will have less desire to remove the dead husks of claws through scratching.
4. Nail caps are available commercially to cover the claws. A nontoxic adhesive is used to attach a plastic cap over each claw.

Speak with your veterinarian about alternatives to cat declawing.

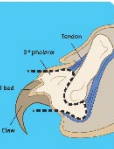
Use this QR code to learn more about why declawing is bad for your cat.



Remember: Your cat depends on you for protection.

This information is provided by Humane Veterinary Medical Alliance, a program of Humane World for Animals. Visit humanevet.org to learn more.

5 reasons not to declaw your cat:



1. Declawing involves amputating the entire last part of the 10 front toes and at least two of the rear toes, too.
2. Declawing, whether performed using a scalpel or laser, involves no medical benefits to cats and is a painful process, in both patients and people who perform it.
3. Nerves, tendons and muscles are severed along with the claws, making recovery from declawing painful and lengthy.
4. Declawing robs a cat of an integral means of behavior, movement, escape and communication.
5. Declawing is banned or is considered unethical in most other countries.

Cat declawing: Why it's a bad idea for your cat

Download this printable PDF for use as a poster or fact sheet at humanepro.org/page/end-cat-declawing.

Guide to Cat Behavior Counseling

A manual for resolving cat behavior issues to keep cats in their homes. [Download the PDF.](#)

About us

Together, we tackle the root causes of animal cruelty and suffering to create permanent change.

With millions of supporters and work happening in over 50 countries, Humane World for Animals—formerly called the Humane Society of the United States and Humane Society International—addresses the most deeply entrenched forms of animal cruelty and suffering. As the leading voice in the animal protection space, we work to end the cruelest practices, care for animals in crisis and build a stronger animal protection movement.

Driving toward the greatest global impact, we aim to achieve the vision behind our name: a more compassionate world.



**Humane World
for Animals™**

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