

## Declawing – Argument vs. Fact

1. **ARGUMENT:** Veterinarians make a great deal of money doing declaws and that is why we want to continue the practice.

**FACT:** Declaws make up on average less than 2% of annual gross income, not a significant source of income for a veterinarian.

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2. **ARGUMENT:** Veterinarians are doing hundreds of declaws every year because we push declaw surgery (see argument 1).

**FACT:** Veterinarians are doing considerably fewer declaw procedures because we ARE educating clients on alternative options and discussing the procedure in detail. For example, in one veterinary practice located in Buffalo, New York, there are 4,500 active clients, 6,500 active patients, and half of those are feline. In 2015, that practice performed less than 30 declaws, a 50% decrease from 2013.

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3. **ARGUMENT:** Banning declaws will NOT increase the number of cats given to shelters.

**FACT:** A Canadian study determined that 50% of cat owners would NOT own their cats if they were unable to have them declawed! All of those would either NOT have been adopted or would have been relinquished.

**FACT:** 72% of relinquished cats will be euthanized in shelters.

**FACT:** Elderly patients whose only companion is their cat many times would need to relinquish that cat to move into facilities that require cats to be declawed for the safety of the residents.

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4. **ARGUMENT:** The relinquishment rate did not go up in California counties where declaw is banned so it won't happen in NY.

**FACT:** The declaw rate never went down because clients simply went to another town or county to have their pet declawed, so the relinquishment statistics don't necessarily correspond to the inability to declaw.

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5. **ARGUMENT:** There is NEVER a human medical requirement to have a declawed cat because national medical groups say so.

**FACT:** Individual human physicians ARE making recommendations to their individual patients to have owned cats declawed for the owner's or a family member's safety. It is the person's individual doctor whose advice needs to be followed. For example, veterinarians have firsthand experience with declaw requests coming from clients with children that are hemophiliacs, clients that have had an organ transplant and are on

medication lowering their immune response to infections, clients on chemotherapy regimens, and clients taking medications significantly inhibiting blood clots.

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6. **ARGUMENT:** All cats that are declawed are in considerable pain their entire life.

**FACT:** A review of declaw studies reported that lameness was observed in LESS than 1% of declawed cats (5 in 582 or 0.86%). Veterinarians are using multimodal pain control, nerve blocks, and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications to achieve excellent pain control when performing a declaw.

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7. **ARGUMENT:** Most cats in shelters are relinquished declawed cats because all declawed cats have elimination problems and will not use or prefer not to use the litter box.

**FACT:** Multiple statistically accurate studies DID NOT show an increase in elimination behaviors between clawed and declawed cats. The rate was 16% irrespective of the presence of claws. Studies addressing relinquishment to shelters DID NOT observe a statistical difference in aggression or elimination disorders between declawed and clawed cats.

**FACT:** There is NO strong evidence to suggest that declawing increases the risk of unwanted behaviors.

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8. **ARGUMENT:** Declawing cats always results in negative consequences.

**FACT:** Overall, owners who chose to declaw their cats reported that the procedure and the results met or exceeded expectations.

**FACT:** Surveys of cat owners who declawed their cats reported a perceived increase in the owner/cat relationship.

**FACT:** The large majority of cats who are declawed have a very high quality of life without pain or negative consequences.

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9. **ARGUMENT:** Many cats will lose their toes and paws as a result of a declaw.

**FACT:** This is not only extremely rare, but in instances where this does occur it is often secondary to the declawing process. The majority of veterinarians have never experienced that in a declaw post surgery.

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10. **ARGUMENT:** The New York State Veterinary Medical Society does not speak for all veterinarians and its legislative priorities are determined by a small executive group within the organization.

**FACT:** The New York State Veterinary Medical Society is recognized as the advocacy organization for and voice of the profession of veterinary medicine in New York State. The organization's official position on legislation is reflective of the overall desire to protect a veterinarian's scope of practice and right to discuss all options with a client and patient.