



Declawing (Onychectomy)

NYSVMS Position

Veterinarians take the issue of onychectomy (declawing) very seriously and believe that it should be an available option when the alternative is abandonment or euthanasia.

Many doctors direct that their patients have their cats declawed when they are immuno-compromised, diabetic, hemophiliac, on immune suppressing medication, and for various other medical reasons. While medical literature does not recommend declawing in all circumstances, in practice some doctors will not take that risk with their patient's health and order the patients to remove cats with claws from their home. These cat owners should not need to face relinquishment or euthanasia of their pet because the option to declaw cats is unavailable.

Cats that would lose their home if not declawed face a higher risk of euthanasia than if their owner were able to care for them. They also exchange a life of comfort and care to potentially spend years in conditions that may be far from ideal for long-term living.

The NYSVMS believes a veterinarian, as a licensed medical professional with the education and knowledge to safely perform medical procedures on animals, should be permitted to make medical decisions after direct consultation with a client and a thorough examination of the patient and its home circumstances. It is a veterinarian's obligation to consult with a client regarding the normal scratching behavior of cats, alternatives to declawing, the procedure itself, and the potential risks to the patient.

The decision to declaw a cat is a medical decision that should be made by the owners in consultation with a trained, licensed, and state-supervised veterinarian operating within the appropriate standards of practice. Declawing of domestic cats should be considered when its clawing presents an above normal health risk for its owner(s) or after attempts have been made to prevent the cat from using its claws destructively.

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