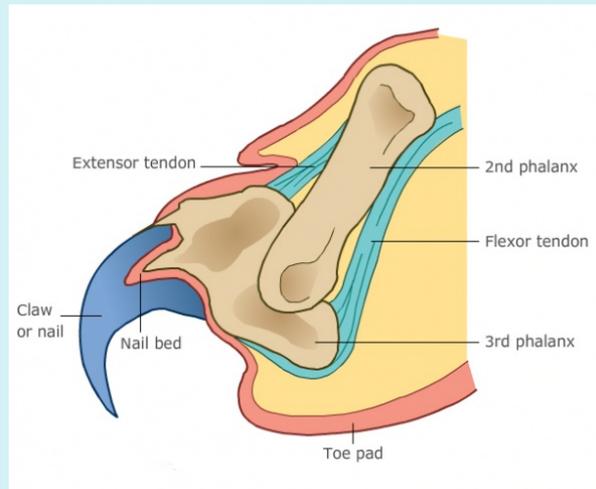


# CAT SCRATCHING BEHAVIOR

## WHY DO CATS SCRATCH?

Scratching is a normal feline behavior. Although scratching does serve to shorten and condition the claws, perhaps the most important reason cats scratch is to mark their territory. Some cats may increase their territorial marking (e.g., scratching, urine marking) in situations of anxiety or conflict. Cats may also threaten or play with a swipe of their paws.

For cats that live primarily outdoors, scratching is seldom a problem for the owners. Scratching is usually directed at prominent objects such as tree trunks or fence posts. Cats that live primarily or exclusively indoors may run into disfavor with their owners when they begin to scratch furniture, walls, or doors, or when they use their claws to climb up, or hang from the drapes. Claws can also cause injuries to people when the cats are overly playful or don't like a particular type of handling or restraint. With a good understanding of cat behavior and a little bit of effort, it is possible to prevent or avoid most clawing problems, even for those cats that live exclusively indoors.



## WHAT IS DECLAWING?

Feline declawing is an elective and ethically controversial procedure, which is not medically necessary for cats. Declawing entails the amputation of a cat's third phalanx, or third 'toe bone'. Unlike human nails, cats' claws are attached to the last bone in their toes. A comparison in human terms would be cutting off a person's finger at the last joint of

Medical drawbacks to declawing 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 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. Some cats may become biters because they no longer have their claws for defense.

# PREVENTING INAPPROPRIATE SCRATCHING

## Scratching posts/pads

Provide your cat with suitable 'scratchers' where they can exhibit normal scratching behavior. Scratchers come in multiple styles and textures. It is important to experiment with a variety of different scratchers to determine what your cat prefers.



## Appropriate environmental enrichment

Providing your cat with an environment that is enriching is vital to teaching your cat to scratch on appropriate objects. Destructive scratching can occur in cats because their needs are not being met. Provide your cat the proper resources to perform natural behaviors.

## Synthetic facial pheromone spray/ diffusers

Continued scratching by cats may be related to stress, attention seeking, or a perceived lack of security in their environment. Synthetic facial pheromone sprays can be used to relieve anxiety or stress. Feliway can be sprayed on objects or areas in the home where your cat is exhibiting undesired scratching. Applying daily comforting pheromones can prevent your cat's need to mark these areas again.



## Regular claw trimming

Regularly trimming your cat's claws can prevent injury and damage to household items. Proper feline nail trimmer should be used to prevent splintering of the claws. The frequency of nail trimming will depend on your cat's lifestyle. Indoor cats, kittens, and older cats will need more regular nail trims, whereas outdoor cats may naturally wear down their nails requiring less

## Temporary synthetic nail caps

Synthetic nail caps can be glued over your cat's nails to prevent human injury and damage to items. The nail caps usually need to be re-applied every 4-6 weeks.

