

Nova Scotia Veterinary Medical Association

Information and CONSENT FORM for clients who request cat declawing

The Nova Scotia Veterinary Medical Association (NSVMA) recognizes declawing of the domestic cat is not normally a medically necessary act. However, there are circumstances where this surgical procedure may be used to support and protect the human animal bond as opposed to abandonment, relinquishment or euthanasia.

The NSVMA added a legislative change (Section 46) to the Code of Ethics in September 2014, whereby an owner who is requesting feline declaw must be provided with a clear outline of the procedure by the veterinarian intending to perform the procedure, prior to the owner considering surgical consent.

To facilitate this end, all owners requesting the feline declaw procedure must read, and sign this document, before signing a general surgical release.

The Nova Scotia Veterinary Medical Association strongly believes that it is the obligation of veterinarians to provide cat owners with complete education with regard to feline onychectomy. There are significant misconceptions about normal feline behavior, and veterinarians are routinely presented with frequently asked questions. The following points are the foundation for full understanding and disclosure regarding declawing:

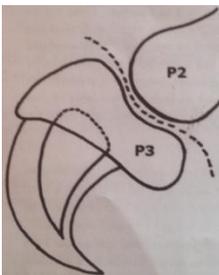
- Scratching is a normal feline behavior, is a means for cats to mark their territory both visually and with scent, and is used for claw conditioning (“husk” removal) and stretching activity.
- Prior to considering declawing, owners must have provided suitable implements for normal scratching behavior. Examples are scratching posts, cardboard boxes, lumber or logs, and carpet or fabric remnants affixed to stationary objects. Implements should be tall or long enough to allow full stretching, and firmly anchored to provide necessary resistance to scratching. Positively reinforcing cats in the use of these implements is recommended.
- Appropriate claw care consisting of trimming the claws every 1-2 weeks can be performed to help prevent injury or undesired damage to household items.
- Temporary synthetic nail caps are available as an alternative to de-clawing to prevent human injury or damage to property. Surgical declawing is not a medically necessary procedure for the cat in most cases.
- While rare in occurrence, there are inherent risks with any surgical procedure including, but not limited to:
 - anesthetic complications
 - hemorrhage
 - infection
 - side effects of pain medication
 - pain - including the rare possibility of long term neuralgia pain
- The surgical alternative of tendonectomy has been considered by some veterinarians and owners to provide unsatisfactory and deleterious results due to the overgrowth of nails, the need for more extensive claw care to be provided by the owner than if not performed, and the

development of discomfort in some patients.

- The NSVMA reviews scientific data and supports controlled scientific studies that provide insight into all aspects of feline medicine. The NSVMA recognizes that feline de-clawing is an ethically controversial procedure; however there is no scientific evidence that declawing leads to behavioral abnormalities when compared to control groups. There is scientific data that shows that cats who have undesired claw behavior are more likely to be euthanized, or more readily relinquished, released or abandoned, thereby contributing to the homeless cat population. Where scratching behavior is an issue as to whether or not a particular cat can remain as an acceptable household pet in a particular home situation, the decision to perform surgical de-clawing may be undertaken.
- If you belong to a household where cats interact with geriatric, diabetic or immunocompromised people, extensive education about infection and zoonotic disease potential should be discussed and documented at this time. Surgical de-clawing is an option in such households to help protect this group of people against life-threatening complications from cat scratches.
- It is recommended that declawed cats be housed indoors or leashed when outside.
- If surgical de-clawing is performed, appropriate use of safe and effective anesthetic agents and the use of safe and effective multimodal peri-operative analgesics for an appropriate length of time are imperative and not elective.
- Declaw procedures involving all 4 paws are strongly discouraged and rarely warranted.
- Declawing is the surgical amputation of a cat's 3rd phalynx (last toe bone) and attached claw. The following is an outline of the surgical procedure: The dotted line represents the incision made to disarticulate the last phalynx (p3) with nail attached when performing a declaw. This permanently removes the nail or claw from the corresponding digit. The skin wound is typically sealed with tissue adhesive or absorbable sutures. Most cats will require 10-14 days to heal following surgery. Recovery times may vary pending factors such as age or weight of the cat.

CONSENT: I have read and understood the above information with respect to declawing and have had an opportunity to discuss the same with my veterinarian. I am prepared to proceed with having my cat surgically declawed. Signature of owner or agent of owner

_____ Signature of Veterinarian
_____ Date:



De-Claw Protocol 14111