



POSITION STATEMENT

Feline Declawing (Onychectomy)

Position

The Humane Society of Kitchener Waterloo & Stratford Perth believes in a kinder, safer Ontario for all. We oppose declawing of cats. We believe in the humane treatment of all animals, who therefore should be provided with high levels of care to ensure their health, comfort and behavioural needs.

Rationale

- Declawing (also known as onychectomy) is a surgical procedure that involves the amputation of the last digital bone on each toe, which is the equivalent of cutting off each of our own finger tips at the first knuckle! Many people declaw cats to stop them from scratching the furniture, which is "essentially an act of mutilation done to modify the cat for our benefit". There are some medical conditions that will require a cat to have an onychectomy procedure, to prolong its quality of life. Rarely does this include all nails needing to be removed from each toe.
- Long term physical effects of declawing may include chronic pain in the paw, lameness, and pain in other areas due to altered gait. 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 regrowth of improperly removed claws, nerve damage, and bone spurs. Some cats may exhibit behavioural problems due to impairment of normal behaviors, including, but not limited to aggression and/or biting, and even litterbox avoidance due to pain.¹ Should a declawed cat accidentally get outside, it does not have the means to defend itself against predators.
- The provinces of PEI, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and British Columbia have all banned the declawing of cats.
- The Humane Society of the United States does not support declawing of cats.
- The Ontario Veterinary Medical Association (OVMA) opposes elective and non-therapeutic Partial Digital Amputation (PDA), commonly known as declawing or onychectomy, of domestic cats.²
- The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) opposes elective and non-therapeutic Partial Digital Amputation (PDA), commonly known as declawing or onychectomy, of domestic cats.³
- On December 8, 2020, a bill was introduced by Davenport NDP MPP Marit Stiles that would put an end to the practice of declawing cats in Ontario. This bill is still under review.

¹ AVMA Literature review on the welfare implications of Declawing of Domestic Cats, July 23 2019, pg 3-5

² OVMA Position Statement on Partial Digital Amputation of the Domestic Field Cat, April 26, 2017

³ CVMA Position Statement on Partial Digital Amputation of the Domestic Feline, March 16, 2017