



# Support a ban on cat declawing

## Ten reasons to ban cat declawing

1. **Declawing is elective amputation of a cat's toes.** It's never done for the benefit of the cat's health or well being.
2. **Declawing is painful, often for life.** Nerves, tendons and bone are severed. Some cats never fully recover and experience nerve damage, phantom pain, pain from retained bone fragments, infection or tissue necrosis.
3. **Cats need to scratch.** Scratching is normal cat behavior; it helps cats stretch, remove dead husks from their claws and adds their scent to their surroundings.
4. **Declawing is like wearing ill-fitting shoes, forever.** Toe amputations shift how cats walk which can lead to lameness and chronic issues with joints and arthritis.
5. **Declawing can put people at harm.** Declawed cats are more likely to bite, and cat bites carry a dangerously high infection risk. Declawing is not recommended by any human health agency.
6. **Declawing doesn't guarantee a cat will remain in the home.** Pain declaw-related behaviors, like biting and avoiding the litter box, increase the risk of the cat being surrendered.
7. **Declawing is not performed in most countries of the world.**
8. **A growing number of U.S. vets agree and oppose non-therapeutic declawing.** The Feline VMA and the Humane VMA are opposed. The largest veterinary hospital systems in the U.S.—VCA, Banfield, and Blue Pearl—will not perform elective declawing.
9. **Declawing is still too commonly practiced and not only as a last resort.** An estimated 20-24% of pet cats in the U.S. have been declawed. Declawing is not a justifiable alternative to rehoming.
10. **There are alternatives!** Scratching posts, regular nail trims, behavior training, nail caps and double-sided tape applied to furniture are all viable and humane alternatives to declawing.

## Support SB 180 HB 5668

Sponsored by:  
Senator Melissa Murray  
Senator Robert Britto  
Representative Bill O'Brien

Prohibits the declawing of cats by any surgical procedure to amputate or modify a portion of a cat's paw in order to remove the cat's claws.

Allows for medically necessary toe amputations to address an existing or recurring condition that jeopardizes the cat's health.

Sets maximum penalty of \$1,000.

**Make Rhode Island a leader in compassion for cats.**

## Declawing is bad for cats

One in five cats has long-term complications from declaw surgery and 50% have immediate post-surgical complications. One in three cats manifest at least one behavioral problem after declawing.

### Declawing explained

Declawing is the amputation of the last bone of each toe on a cat's paw. Other terms for declawing include onychectomy, dactylectomy, phalangectomy and partial digital amputation.

Declawing of the front paws is most common though declawing all four paws also occurs.

The standard method of declawing is amputating with a scalpel or guillotine clipper -- the same tool commonly used to trim a dog's nails. The wounds are closed with stitches or surgical glue, and the feet are bandaged.

Another declaw method is laser surgery, in which a small, intense beam of light cuts through tissue by heating and vaporizing it. Both methods can cause lasting physical problems for the cat.

Tendonectomy is a procedure where the tendon that controls the claw in each toe is severed. The cat retains their claws but can't control them or extend them to scratch. More frequent and challenging nail trims are required to prevent the cat's claws from snagging on people, carpet and furniture, or from growing into the cat's paw pads. The incidence of bleeding, lameness and infection is similar between tendonectomy and declawing.

Improperly removed claws can regrow, causing nerve damage and bone spurs. Additional corrective surgery may alleviate some of the pain.

## Declawing is bad for people

The National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Infectious Diseases Society of America jointly stated that declawing is "not advised" to protect the health of even severely immune-compromised patients.

**20% of cats in the U.S. are declawed. This number has not changed in the last decade indicating that while fewer veterinarians perform the surgery, the prevalence persists.**



### Declawing is not the last resort

There is no evidence that cats with destructive behavior are more likely to be euthanized, abandoned or relinquished to an animal shelter. No jurisdiction that has enacted a declaw ban has experienced an increase in cat relinquishment or euthanasia. The decision of whether or not to declaw should not be impacted by these considerations. Rehoming should be considered a viable alternative to declawing.

Handling cats properly, understanding how to avoid being scratched, the use of temporary nail caps and regular claw trimming can reduce the risk of injury from scratches.

### Declaw bans are expanding

Declawing of cats for non-therapeutic reasons is prohibited or considered unethical practice in most countries around the globe.

Declawing is banned in New York, Maryland, the District of Columbia and Massachusetts. Virginia has a partial ban on declawing.

Many municipalities and counties also ban declawing.