

## Adopting a Declawed Cat

Although a cat's claws may not seem like a big deal to people, in the feline world they affect a lot, from health to behavior. Because of this, it's crucial to learn all the facts on declawed kitties when you bring one home in order to help your new kitty be successful.

### Indoor or Out?

Cats use their claws for numerous reasons, including protection and to help them climb. It is highly recommended to keep declawed cats as indoor pets, as it is risky leaving them to fend for themselves outdoors.

### The Litter Box

If cats were recently declawed, sometimes the litter causes them pain when they step in or scratch in it. Consider switching to a litter type that is less likely to get in their paws or cause pain. The best way to find a litter your cat is comfortable with is to have a variety of litter boxes that are the same, with different cat litter in each. Allow your cat a week or two to choose which litter they like best.

Even cats that have been declawed for some time may start to show signs of litter box aversion. If other medical concerns are ruled out, consider switching litter and/or isolate your cat to a small room with their box to start building good litter box habits.



## **Medical Concerns**

A cat that has been declawed is more likely to suffer from back pain (Martell-Moran, Nicole K., et al. 2017) and urinary issues, such as urinary tract infections, kidney infections, bladder stones, etc. due to them avoiding the litter box and potentially holding in their urine for longer periods of time.

## **Temperament & Behavior**

Studies show that declawed cats are more likely to bite with minimal provocation, exhibit barbering (chewing on themselves), and periuria (peeing around the house) (Martell-Moran, Nicole K., et al. 2017). These unwanted behaviors stem from a place of discomfort and anxiety.



A declawed cat does not have their main form of protection and as such, may feel more vulnerable and therefore be more anxious or scared, especially when introduced to a new place or animals. Patience is key in preventing these problems from arising. Give your cat plenty of time to adjust to their new home. Know that it may take several weeks to months for them to feel completely comfortable in a new setting.

Cats have scent glands in their paw pads and deposit pheromones by scratching surfaces. It is not uncommon for a declawed cat to still want to scratch on surfaces despite having no claws for this reason.

## **Other Pets**

Just as you will want to go slow with introducing your declawed cat to your home, you will want to go slow with introducing your cat to other animals. In general, declawed cats can live harmoniously & happily with dogs, cats, and small critters. The introduction is key and the slower it is, the higher the chance of success. (See the “Welcoming Your New Cat” handout).

## **Claw Regrowth**

If a declaw surgery was incomplete, there is a potential for the cat’s claws to regrow. When and if regrowth occurs, the claws typically do not grow back normally. This can cause pain for your cat. Be on the lookout for signs of this problem such as the cat walking differently. If you notice anything, take your new cat to the veterinarian as soon as possible.

## **References**

Martell-Moran, Nicole K., et al. “Pain and Adverse Behavior in Declawed Cats.” *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*, vol. 20, no. 4, Apr. 2018, pp. 280–288, doi:10.1177/1098612X17705044.