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Subject: COUNCIL BILL NO. CB17-0709 on Declawing of Cats
Date: Thursday, November 02, 2017 4:38:24 PM
Attachments: [Scientific Evidence of the Harmful Effects of Declawing.pdf](#)

Thank you for considering this bill adding procedures to declaw or tendonectomize cats in the cruelty statutes.

I am a Colorado-licensed, federally accredited veterinarian with 23 years of experience taking care of cats from all over the Denver metro area. In the past, I have performed declaw surgery, and I have also seen the damage done to cats from this surgery. I am strongly against declawing, unlike many of my veterinary colleagues who seem to be oblivious to the long-term consequences. However, the American Association of Feline Practitioners, American Animal Hospital Association, and Canadian Veterinary Medical Association all oppose declawing, and I believe they are on the right side of history.

I am sending the attached PDF to every council member, to make sure everyone has an accurate representation of how declawing affects cats.

(Please don't let the length deter you; it's mostly bullet points and pictures!)

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Sincerely,

Jean Hofve, DVM
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Scientific Evidence of the Harmful Effects of Declawing

Reported Medical Complications

1. Chronic pain
2. Hemorrhage (bleeding)
3. Lacerated paw pads
4. Swelling
5. Reluctance to bear weight on affected limbs
6. Neuropraxia (transient motor paralysis)
7. Radial nerve damage
8. Lameness
9. Infection
10. Abscess
11. Tissue necrosis
12. Wound dehiscence (re-opening of surgical site)
13. Incomplete healing
14. Protrusion and/or necrosis of 2nd phalanx (middle finger bone) through the paw pad and skin.
15. Claw regrowth (documented to occur up to 15 years post-declaw)
16. Scurs (growth of deformed claw segments)
17. Retention of flexor process of 3rd phalanx
18. Chronic draining tracts
19. Self-mutilation
20. Dermatitis
21. Lethargy
22. Carpal hyperextension (palmigrade stance, dropped carpus, walking on wrists)
23. Chronic intermittent lameness
24. Chronic pain syndrome
25. Flexor tendon contracture
26. Aggression
27. Cystitis (bladder infection associated with stress)
28. House-soiling not associated with cystitis
29. Laser burns
30. Pressure necrosis of paws, wrists, and legs due to excessive bandage tightness



Swelling 2 weeks
after declawing



Draining abscess 8 years
after declawing





Ryder



Abby



RYDER



Teeger



Abby

A few cats for whom declaw surgery went very, very wrong. They will live, with these injuries for the rest of their lives.

Reported Medical Complication Rates

- 24% [Jankowski AJ, Brown DC, Duval J, et al. Comparison of effects of elective tenectomy or onychectomy in cats. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*. 1998;213:370-373.]
- 53% [in cats and two adhesives for wound closure. *Veterinary Medicine*.1993; 88:516-525.]

- 1.4% [Pollari FL, Bonnett BN. Evaluation of postoperative complications following elective surgeries of dogs and cats at private practices using computer records. *Canadian Veterinary Journal*. 1996;37:672-678.]
- 82.5% for blade and 51.5% for shear (guillotine) technique [Tobias KM, Harvey RC, Byarlay JM. A comparison of four methods of analgesia in cats following ovariohysterectomy. *Veterinary Anaesthesia & Analgesia*. 2006 Nov;33(6):390-398]
- 80% [Yeon SC, Flanders JA, Scarlett JM, et al. Attitudes of owners regarding tendonectomy and onychectomy in cats. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*. 2001;218:43-47.]
- Declawed cats were 300% more likely to have back pain (odds ratio [OR] 2.9) than intact cats. [Martell-Moran NK, Solano M, Townsend HGG. Pain and adverse behavior in declawed cats. *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*, 2017]

Lameness - a Typical Complication

In one study, twelve cats (13.6%) were classified as mildly lame at the long-term recheck [Clark K, Bailey T, Rist P, et al. Comparison of 3 methods of onychectomy. *Canadian Veterinary Journal*. 2014;55:255–262.]

Another study found that lameness occurred more frequently in cats with [scalpel] disarticulation amputation (14/87, 16%) than in cats with bony [guillotine] amputation (4/80, 5%), possibly due to greater soft tissue trauma. Dehiscence (re-opening of incisions) occurred in 22% and 12% of cats, respectively. [Clark K, Bailey T, Rist P, et al. Comparison of 3 methods of onychectomy. *Canadian Veterinary Journal*. 2014;55:255–262.]

Other researchers documented that “43 cats showed lameness that persisted from 1-54 days. Long term follow up was done for 121/163 cats; one cat showed prolonged lameness (96 months). [Tobias KS. Feline declawing at a teaching institution: a retrospective study of 163 cases. *Veterinary Surgery*. 1994; 23:274-280.]

A recent study of post-surgery problems reported the highest rates of pain-related complications: up to 23% of cats with ongoing lameness, and 42.3% of cats showing signs of pain when their paws were handled. Clients also reported long-term behavioral changes in cats following declawing (house soiling); resistance to paws being handled; or increased incidence or severity of biting) compared with the same cats' behavior before the procedure. [Clark K, Bailey T, Rist P, et al. Comparison of 3 methods of onychectomy. *Canadian Veterinary Journal*. 2014;55:255–262.]

Persistence of Lameness

- >3 days [Landsberg GM. Cat owners' attitudes toward declawing. *Anthrozoos* 1991;4:192-197] and [Yeon SC, Flanders JA, Scarlett JM, et al. Attitudes of owners regarding tendonectomy and onychectomy in cats. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*. 2001;218:43-47.]
- >1 week [Martinez SA, Hauptmann J, Walshaw R. Comparing two techniques for declawing in cats and two adhesives for wound closure. *Veterinary Medicine*. 1993; 88:516-525.]

- **≥ 8 days** [Holmberg DL, Brisson BA. A prospective comparison of postoperative morbidity associated with the use of scalpel blades and lasers for onychectomy in cats. *Canadian Veterinary Journal*. 2006 Feb;47(2):162-3.]
- **>12 days** [Romans CW, Gordon WJ, Robinson DA, *et al*. Effect of postoperative analgesic protocol on limb function following declawing in cats. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*. 2005 Jul 1;227(1):89-93.]
- **180 days** [Jankowski AJ, Brown DC, Duval J, *et al*. Comparison of effects of elective tenectomy or onychectomy in cats. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*. 1998;213:370-373.]
- **96 months (8 years)** [Tobias KS. Feline declawing at a teaching institution: a retrospective study of 163 cases. *Veterinary Surgery*. 1994; 23:274-280.].

Claw Regrowth

Claw regrowth is the so-called “pebble in the shoe” issue. All the time that claw is growing (reported occurrences up to 15 years post declaw) it is causing pain. Claw regrowth occurs regardless of skill or technique.

15.4% Shear [guillotine] nail clipper

6.5% Scalpel

3.4% Laser

[Clark K, Bailey T, Rist P, *et al*. Comparison of 3 methods of onychectomy. *Canadian Veterinary Journal*. 2014;55:255–262.]

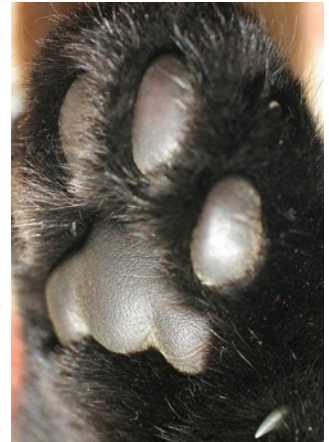


This is what a veterinarian found inside a single “mass” on a cat’s paw: 16 claw fragments. That big circular ring is one claw that has completely grown around—inside the toe. The cat was declawed 9 years before.

Changes in the Toes and Pads

The typical change in focus of weight from the broad base of P3 to the much smaller surface of the distal P2 actually alters the shape of the paw pads. The pointed end of P2 becomes weight-bearing, resulting in these changes, which are easily observed in declawed cats.

Normal Paw Pads: consistent oval shape



Declawed Paw Pads: rounded, irregular shape



Declawing even changes the way the toes move, because the surgery severs tendons and ligaments, which have a relatively poor blood supply so they heal very slowly. Scar tissue also forms, which eventually shortens the tendons and ligaments and affects range of motion. [Velnar 2009]



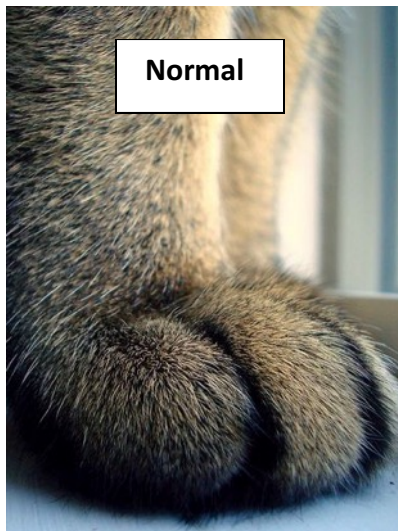
When a clawed cat extends its toes, they are evenly spaced.



These declawed cats' toes are partly extended; note how the toes aren't spaced evenly (the middle two seem "stuck together"). The toes are also developing a blocky, "clubbed" appearance because the remaining toe bones don't meet at a normal angle.

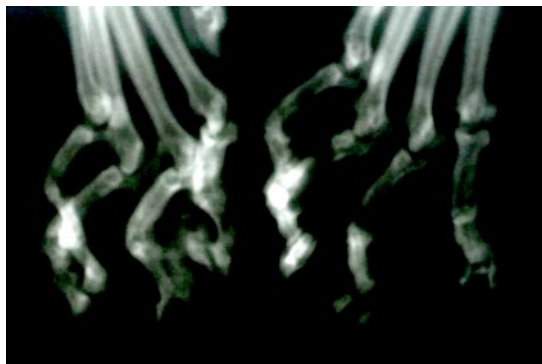


Similar to the changes seen on radiographs, the shape of the paws go from smooth, rounded toes to a more angular shape; sometimes even vertical as the angle between P2 and P3 becomes more acute.



This effect can also be seen on radiographs.

Normal Paws



Declawed Paws



Radiographs of 3 declawed cats. The one on the right, with the most extreme angle contraction between P1 and P2, was visibly lame. (Photo credit: K. Linn)



Behavioral Complications

- **Significant increases in the odds of periuria/perichezia (OR 7.2), biting (OR 4.5) and barbering (OR 3.06) occurred in declawed compared with control cats.** This study of 274 cats used control groups, with declawed and non-declawed, age-matched, owned and shelter cats. (Note: Periuria is urination in inappropriate places; perichezia is defecation in inappropriate places; in other words, litter box avoidance.) [Martell-Moran NK, Solano M, Townsend HGG. Pain and adverse behavior in declawed cats. *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*, 2017]
- “Results of the study reported here supported the hypothesis that **onychectomy is associated with an increase in house soiling behavior of cats.**” This was a cross-sectional survey of a non-random sample of households with cats. It compared the behavior of 455 cats, of which 66.8% were declawed. While the sample was definitely skewed, the analysis appears to be quite good. Being declawed was an independent risk factor for house soiling. [Gerard AF, Larson M, Baldwin CJ. Telephone survey to investigate relationships between onychectomy or onychectomy technique and house soiling in cats. 2016 Sept 15; 249(6): 638-642.]
- “**Feline onychectomy is also associated with adverse social behavior, such as inappropriate urination and biting in some cats.**” [Ellison GW. Feline onychectomy complications: prevention & management. *NAVC Clinician's Brief*. 2003 April:29-33.]
- “**Postsurgical conditions that cause pain or discomfort while urinating or defecating, such as onychectomy or tendonectomy**” as a medical cause of inappropriate urination. [Curtis TE. Feline inappropriate urination. *NAVC Institute: Today's Veterinary Practice*. 2015 Sept/Oct.]

- “[A] common concern is behavioral changes, which may include decreased activity, decreased appetite, or increased aggression. [Gaynor JS. Chronic pain syndrome of feline onychectomy. *NAVC Clinician’s Brief*. April 2005.]
- [Out of 39 cats] “six cats that underwent onychectomy would not use the litterbox (house soiling)... and 7 cats had an increase in biting habits or intensity of biting following onychectomy.” ***That is, 33% of cats developed behavior problems (house soiling or biting) after being declawed.*** [Yeon SC, Flanders JA, Scarlett JM, et al. Attitudes of owners regarding tendonectomy and onychectomy in cats. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*. 2001;218:43-47.]
- “Short-term complications included... **changes in behavior, such as inappropriate urination...**” [Jankowski AJ, Brown DC, Duval J, et al. Comparison of effects of elective tenectomy or onychectomy in cats. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*. 1998;213:370-373.]
- “**Among relinquished cats, 25 of 84 (29.8%) declawed cats had daily or weekly inappropriate elimination... and 16 (19%) of declawed cats were aggressive toward people** on a daily or weekly basis... After adjustment for other variables, being declawed... [were] associated with an increased risk for relinquishment.”). *Inappropriate elimination was far more common in declawed (52.4%) as intact cats (29.1%); and declawed cats were nearly twice as likely to be relinquished.* (Biting was reported for approximately 12% of declawed cats... house soiling was reported for approximately 25% of declawed cats versus approximately 15% of sexually intact cats. [Patronek GJ. Assessment of claims of short- and long-term complications associated with onychectomy in cats. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*. 2001 Oct 1;219(7):932-937.]
- “**Three behavioral changes (house-soiling, no longer covering stools, and disliking paws being handled) developed after declawing...** 4% reported a possible increase in biting or harder biting following declawing.” [Landsberg GM. (c) Feline scratching and destruction and the effects of declawing. *Veterinary Clinics of North America: Small Animal Practice*. 1991 Mar;21(2):265-79.]
- “After declawing, one cat (4%) began to defecate outside the litter pan and three (12%) began to bite, **54% of the cats with behavior problems were declawed.**” *More than half of cats with reported behavior problems were declawed, yet only about 25% of all cats are declawed.* [Bennett M, Hout KA, Erb HN. Effects of declawing on feline behavior. *Companion Animal Practice*. 1988;2:7-12.]
- Recent research on individual declawed cats, including radiographs, was described by a Utah veterinarian, who thus far has found that:
 - **66%** of declawed cats had **bone fragments** left behind. These fragments likely feel to the cat like pebbles in your shoe. They can also cause nails to regrow under the skin, which can then form abscesses (only if one of them is the growth center).
 - **Osteomyelitis**, a painful bone infection, was present in **30%** of declawed cats.

- 15% of declawed cats displayed **litter box avoidance**.
- 36% of declawed cats were **aggressive**, with a tendency to bite with little provocation or warning.
- **Bladder inflammation and lower urinary tract disease** were very common in declawed cats.

[Singer J. Is declawing cats inhumane? *Pet360*. tinyurl.com/DoubDeclaw]