

**REGULAR CALENDAR**

**February 28, 2023**

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**REPORT OF COMMITTEE**

**The Committee on Environment and Agriculture to which was referred HB 231-FN, prohibiting the removal of claws from cats.**

**WITHOUT RECOMMENDATION**

## COMMITTEE REPORT

Committee:	<b>Environment and Agriculture</b>
Bill Number:	<b>HB 231-FN</b>
Title:	<b>prohibiting the removal of claws from cats.</b>
Date:	<b>February 28, 2023</b>
Consent Calendar:	<b>Regular Calendar</b>
Recommendation:	<b>WITHOUT RECOMMENDATION</b>

**Statement in support of Ought to Pass:** This bill would make the declawing of cats a civil violation. This practice is roundly condemned by veterinarians and appears to be rare in the state, but the committee received testimony that it does still occur. The committee also received testimony that some veterinarians are strongly in favor of the bill because it provides them with support when they refuse to perform the procedure when requested by clients. The bill would continue to permit the procedure for medically necessary reasons. The CDC does not advocate for the declawing of cats as a protective measure for people with medical conditions complicated by cat scratches.

Rep. Nicholas Germana

**Statement in support of Inexpedient to Legislate:** The view in favor of Inexpedient to Legislate is that the government should not be involved in directing how veterinarians practice medicine or dictate what procedures they should or should not perform, nor should we make it a civil penalty with fines for violation. The testimony of state representatives, private organizations, and veterinarians, indicated that cat declawing is virtually non-existent in New Hampshire. Most veterinarians in New Hampshire refuse to perform the operation unless there is a medical necessity. Veterinarians also already provide their customers advice regarding alternative approaches to declawing. There are cases where options to declaw could keep a cat in its home rather than rehoming or euthanasia.

Rep. Jim Creighton

Original: House Clerk  
Cc: Committee Bill File

## REGULAR CALENDAR

Environment and Agriculture

**HB 231-FN**, prohibiting the removal of claws from cats. **WITHOUT RECOMMENDATION**

**Statement in support of Ought to Pass:** This bill would make the declawing of cats a civil violation. This practice is roundly condemned by veterinarians and appears to be rare in the state, but the committee received testimony that it does still occur. The committee also received testimony that some veterinarians are strongly in favor of the bill because it provides them with support when they refuse to perform the procedure when requested by clients. The bill would continue to permit the procedure for medically necessary reasons. The CDC does not advocate for the declawing of cats as a protective measure for people with medical conditions complicated by cat scratches.

Rep. Nicholas Germana

**Statement in support of Inexpedient to Legislate:** The view in favor of Inexpedient to Legislate is that the government should not be involved in directing how veterinarians practice medicine or dictate what procedures they should or should not perform, nor should we make it a civil penalty with fines for violation. The testimony of state representatives, private organizations, and veterinarians, indicated that cat declawing is virtually non-existent in New Hampshire. Most veterinarians in New Hampshire refuse to perform the operation unless there is a medical necessity. Veterinarians also already provide their customers advice regarding alternative approaches to declawing. There are cases where options to declaw could keep a cat in its home rather than rehoming or euthanasia.

Rep. Jim Creighton

Original: House Clerk

Cc: Committee Bill File

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND AGRICULTURE

PUBLIC HEARING ON HB 231-FN

**BILL TITLE:** prohibiting the removal of claws from cats.

**DATE:** February 7, 2023

**LOB ROOM:** 301-303                      **Time Public Hearing Called to Order:** 12:02 p.m.

**Time Adjourned:** 1:21 p.m.

**Committee Members:** Reps. Aron, Creighton, Comtois, Verville, A. Davis, Brouillard, Coulon, Kenny, Potenza, Smart, Bixby, Sofikitis, Dutzy, M. Murray, Germana, Haskins, M. Howard, Knab, Morse and Vogt

**Bill Sponsors:**

**Rep. Bordes**

**Rep. Read**

**TESTIMONY**

\* Use asterisk if written testimony and/or amendments are submitted.

- Rep. Bordes – largely performed for inconvenience – it is amputation – some cats behavior may change due to declawing
- Rep. Comtois – Q. how many declaws have been performed in the State A. do not have the numbers
- Rep Germana – Q. what would stop a Vet from performing it for therapeutic reasons and how would it be enforced A. not sure
- Rep. Potenza – Q. You stated that the majority of veterinarians do not perform this, is this an overreach? A. No Q. we are talking about veterinary association that are only doing it for therapeutic reasons, if 99% do not perform A. to deter
- Rep Murray – Q. with regards to lines 10-12 – any person who violates this section, is this the owner or the Veterinarian A. the Veterinarian as I understand it
- \*Nancy Holmes – written testimony – New Boston, NH - opposes –
- \*Joan O'Brien – supports – Amherst, NH – NH Animal Rights League – number of cats declawed is not important –
- Rep Germana – Q. are you familiar with other states that have banned this practice, what are the requirements needed to declaw due to medically necessary reason A. I am not
- Rep Knab Q. how complicated is the surgery A. we have heard from veterinarians in past hearings that it is rather a crude surgery, but not really sure Q. how does your organization view cropping of ears and tail docking A. today we are only talking about cats
- Kurt Ehrenberg – supports – State Director of HSUS – this is a barbaric practice and no one who loved their pet would perform it on them - we cannot find a reputable veterinarian in this state that performs this – my job is to represent the animals in this state – there is no diagnostic therapeutic reason to perform this surgery

- Rep. Comtois – Q. Did you state that there is no diagnostic therapeutic reason to perform this surgery A. yes
- Rep Creighton Q. did you state there are no reputable veterinarians in this state that are doing it A. yes
- Rep. Bixby – Q. if it is so hard to find people doing this, how would we find the people that is doing this A. It's in the bill
- Rep. Comtois Q. do you think that the relationship between the owner and Veterinarian is important A. here to protect the animals
- Rep Brouillard Q. how many cats do you currently represent and how many are in danger of getting their cats removed A. I do not represent cats nor own a cat
- \*Angela Ferrari – Dog Owners of the Granite State – opposes – written testimony – also emailed testimony that would reverse the bill legislating the declawing of cats – Missouri bill
- Rep Germana Q. at what point does any procedure dealing with an animal become cruelty A. you have a veterinarian that takes an oath to the health, welfare, etc... we're not adhering to it
- Rep. Dutzy Q. we have many procedures on the books for people that have been banned A. it has been done for many years and for positive outcomes Q. can you speak to the doctor/patient relationships A. I am not a doctor and could not speak to that
- Rep. Read – supports - Rockingham 10, Newmarket and Newfields – the idea of private decisions has been used – all our laws are written for bad actors – Lines 10-12 means any person, not just veterinarians
- Rep Germana Q. who is a bad actor, do you have a specific way that the enforcement mechanism would work A. the prosecution would need to go and collect evidence
- Rep Murray Q. at home declawing, do you have any data regarding that A. I have no data
- Rep Aron Q. if we banned declawing in the state, wouldn't this push more harmful declaws at home A. we already heard that 99.9% of vet do not do this
- Jane Barlow Ray – NHMVA – opposes – practicing since 2006 – not sure where to begin – AVMA does not support routine declawing but does not support legislating it – NHVMA actively discourages the practice – we only represent about 400 veterinarians in the state – many of the corporate veterinarian clinics have already banned the procedure – At the January AVMA meeting spoke with students, it is across the board as it is not being taught – Veterinarians ultimate goal is for the owner/pet bond
- Rep Aron Q. how often are people successfully persuaded not to declaw their cat when talking with their veterinarian A. I can only speak for myself, but 100% rate
- Rep Dutzy Q. if this bill passes what harm does it do to veterinarians A. the harm will be more of an emotional harm, is someone going to tell on you, social media has not been friendly to veterinarians
- Rep Aron Q. with respect to the procedure why would one instance not be cruel and cruel for another instance A. thought that we are doing with no anesthesia is a falsehood – we must adhere to a standard of care, the thought that it would be cruel vs not cruel, as long as we are adhering to a standard of care we would not be accused of cruelty – possibly a definition/semantic issues Q. are there any other procedures that are banned in NH A. not that I am aware

- Rep Bixby Q. at-home declaw kits, have you seen or heard on any issues A. no Q. if you cannot trim your cats, how can you declaw your cat
- Rep. Aron Q. just googled declaw cat kits and it is gel kits you put on the paws
- Rep Sofikitis Q. how many veterinarian clinics in NH A. 900 certified veterinarians in the state, 400 members in their organization
- Rep Germana Q. the bill allows for exceptions, given the possible impact of the animal over its life, would you consider this cruel to the cat A. no, if it is based on the owner/animal bond
- Rep Knab Q. why the AVMA recommends against the procedure A. society has changed, and it is no longer a necessity, and there are other options
- Rep Coulon – Q. would you say that education on this issue would be more effective than this bill criminalizing this A. yes, it is already being done
- Rep Comtois – Q. Corporate practices, how many are members of the AVMA A. not many.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rep. Comtois, Clerk





# House Remote Testify

## Environment and Agriculture Committee Testify List for Bill HB231 on 2023-02-07

Support: 64 Oppose: 7 Neutral: 0 Total to Testify: 0

Export to Excel

<u>Name</u>	<u>City, State</u> <u>Email Address</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Testifying</u>	<u>Non-Germane</u>	<u>Signed Up</u>
Hurley, Jack	Claremont, NH jrhurjd@aol.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/3/2023 1:49 PM
OBrien, Joan	Amherst, NH joanlobrien@yahoo.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/5/2023 7:13 PM
Yurenka, Katrina	Jaffrey, NH kyurenka@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/5/2023 7:21 PM
Slepian, Jean	Stoddard, NH jeans1155@hotmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/5/2023 7:26 PM
Cheese-Probert, Helen	Freedom, NH helencprobert@aol.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/5/2023 7:27 PM
Smith, Ginny	MANCHESTER, NH ginsul@comcast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/5/2023 7:33 PM
Caplan, Elise	Grantham, NH elisegrila@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/5/2023 7:39 PM
Blodgett, Jean	Loudon, NH Jblodgett1962@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/5/2023 7:52 PM
Thompson, Susan	MANCHESTER, NH ginsu@comcast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/5/2023 7:55 PM
Doyle, Kathryn	Concord, NH kathryn.doyle@nh.gov	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/5/2023 7:56 PM
Graber, Caelin	GREENVILLE, NH caelingraber@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/5/2023 7:57 PM
Quilici, Michael	Concord, NH mqilici@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/5/2023 7:57 PM
Fournier, Suzanne	Milford, NH animalfriendlysolutions@comcast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/5/2023 8:05 PM



Hammer, Jennifer	Stratham, NH jennihammer@yahoo.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/5/2023 8:11 PM
Alexander, Elizabeth	Benton, NH goldierocksbest@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/5/2023 8:11 PM
Freilich, Pam	Dunbarton, NH pam@gmavt.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/5/2023 8:21 PM
Flis, Carole	Stratham, NH decaf12@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/5/2023 9:03 PM
Richardson, Diane	Georges mills, NH Workingclasscanine@msn.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	No	2/5/2023 9:36 PM
Haddad, Nuha	Concord, NH nuha.haddad10@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/5/2023 9:55 PM
Ball, Darlene	Claremont, NH darleneball3@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/5/2023 9:55 PM
Rauter, Linda	Chichester, NH lcr80@tds.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/5/2023 10:56 PM
Dombrowski, Sandra	Rye, NH SandraUSA@aol.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 12:30 AM
Griffin, Laurie	Portsmouth, NH Lauriebty@aol.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 3:16 AM
SAWTELLE, ERICK	LEE, NH esawtelles@aol.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	No	2/6/2023 7:21 AM
doyle, maralyn	Newbury, NH maralynruth1@yahoo.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 7:46 AM
Langley, Hester	North sutton, NH hester45@hotmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 8:19 AM
Glenn, Cynthia	Merrimack, NH cglenn410@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 8:33 AM
LiPetri, Joseph	Merrimack, NH jlipetri@live.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 8:34 AM
Trently, Bertha	Stratham, NH bdh1220@hotmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 8:44 AM
Keane, Stephanie	Dublin, NH globetrottingsteph@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 8:52 AM
Booth, Anne	Sharon, NH booth117@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 9:57 AM

Dionne, Linda	Raymond, NH lindld@comcast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 10:32 AM
HAUSER, ROBERT	SHARON, NH rhbusyhaus@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 11:03 AM
Wahl, BJ	Sullivan, NH bjwahl@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 11:34 AM
Switzer, Bob	Sullivan, NH bjwahl@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 11:35 AM
Canelas, Diane	Pelham, NH beebennett1058@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	No	2/6/2023 1:03 PM
Trently, Bill	Stratham, NH trentlyzit@aol.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 1:41 PM
Herlihy, Nina	Rye, NH herlihedrons@comcast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 3:21 PM
Yeaton, Elinor	Concord, NH e.yeaton@comcast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 3:35 PM
GLOVER, JAMES	Raymond, NH glover31188@yahoo.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 4:44 PM
Campbell, Kay	Epsom, NH kkcampbell43@yahoo.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 4:54 PM
Taylor, DVM, Barry	Franklin, NH franklinveterinaryclinic@yahoo.com	A Member of the Public	Myself as a member of the veterinary profession	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 5:06 PM
Kong, Marcia	Belmont, NH mak3474@msn.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 5:11 PM
Youzwak, Jason	Danville, NH veganjay@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 5:20 PM
Carmack, Karen	Manchester, NH Luckysilvercricket@hotmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 5:49 PM
Berio, Simon	Holderness, NH quahog319@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 6:00 PM
Carbone, Debra	Loudon, NH debcarbone@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 6:14 PM
Herrick, Elizabeth	Deering, NH lherrick@outlook.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 6:21 PM
Fransen-Conroy, Michelle	Concord, NH mshellfc@comcast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 6:26 PM

Taylor, Kimberly	Franklin, NH KimImagin@yahoo.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 6:30 PM
Keller, Donna	Nashua, NH donnaKeller@comcast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 6:37 PM
Rice, Amy	Tilton, NH amybeth08@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 7:22 PM
White, Mark	Deering, NH white0320@outlook.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 7:23 PM
Chase, Valerie	Gilford, NH valerieachase@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 7:30 PM
Chase, Thomas	Gilford, NH thomaschase4@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 7:30 PM
Rice, Molly	Meredith, NH Mollyander26@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 7:36 PM
Hils, Sarah	Canterbury, NH shickeyhils@yahoo.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 8:37 PM
Snyder, Kristina	Chester, NH khsnyder22@yahoo.com	A Member of the Public	NH Citizens Against Recreational Trapping	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 9:29 PM
Perrault, Lee	Cape Coral, FL Viades@comcast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 10:01 PM
Fournier, Katrina	Gorham, NH openfire04@yahoo.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/6/2023 10:03 PM
Davis, Kathryn	Rochester, NH dvs.kthryn@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/7/2023 5:07 AM
Ford, Catherine	Brookline, NH omegarr@charter.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	No	2/7/2023 7:29 AM
Campbell, Karen	Epsom, NH klynncampbell50@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/7/2023 8:37 AM
Loosigian, Julie	Sunapee, NH jloosigian@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/7/2023 8:56 AM
Charest, Jeanne	Berlin, NH nhwoodduck@myfairpoint.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	No	2/7/2023 9:31 AM
Moore, Trois	Goffstown, NH mooretrois@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/7/2023 10:20 AM
Fitts, Melodie	Laconis, NH mlfitts@metrocast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	No	2/7/2023 10:52 AM

Pearl, Howard	Senate District 17, NH peter.oneill@leg.state.nh.us	An Elected Official	Myself	Oppose	No	No	2/7/2023 11:59 AM
Fistick, Stanley	Littleton, NH stanleyfistick@yahoo.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/7/2023 1:29 PM
Sanphy, Diandra	Hampton, NH drogo68@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/7/2023 7:42 PM
Shartzter, Jane	Greenlaand, NH shartzterj@aol.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No	2/7/2023 10:37 PM

House Environment and Agriculture Committee  
**HB 231 - Prohibiting the removal of claws from cats**  
February 7, 2023



Supporting Documents

- **AVMA Formally Discourages Declawing of Cats**  
*Today's Veterinary Business*, January 14, 2020
- **HSVMA Leadership Council stands against feline declawing**  
August 2020
- **Pain and adverse behavior in declawed cats**  
*Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*, March 23, 2017
- **Declawing is never the answer — The Paw Project**
- **Maryland Residents: Ban Cruel and Unnecessary Declawing** March 2022
- **Effect of a provincial feline onychetomy ban on cat intake and euthanasia in a British Columbia animal shelter system**  
*Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*, August 14, 2021

NEWS

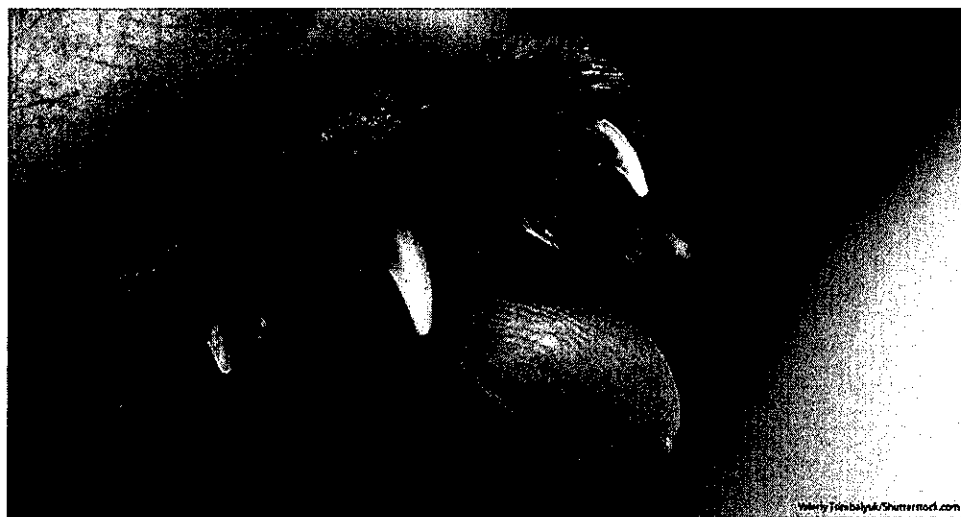
# AVMA Formally Discourages Declawing of Cats

The House of Delegates approves language respecting “the veterinarian’s right to use professional judgment.”

January 14, 2020 | Issue: Online



Ken Niedziela



**T**he American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) has revised its policy on cat declaws, opting to discourage the procedure rather than rely on client education as a way to shed light on other options.

The updated policy was approved by 84% of the House of Delegates after a 90-minute floor discussion during a meeting in Chicago.

Some speakers, among them Texas alternate delegate Sam Miller, DVM, called on colleagues to keep the existing policy.

“We do not advocate for declaws at all,” he said. “But there are times when it is a procedure that needs to be considered ... after thorough education with the owner,” Dr. Miller said.

Rhode Island delegate Cathy Lund, DVM, was one of several members who strongly supported the measure, partly because of growing public opposition to declaws, or onychectomies. New York State and a collection of U.S. cities ban the declawing of cats.

# HSVMA Leadership Council stands against feline declawing

The AVMA's recent statement discouraging feline onychectomy as an elective procedure aligns with the popular stance throughout the global veterinary profession, but will it prompt more states to ban the procedure?

By Holly Cheever, DVM, Anne Fawcett, BA(Hons), BSc(Vet)(Hons), BVSc (Hons), MVS GradCertEdStud, MANZCVS (Animal Welfare), DECAWBM (AWSEL), and Nicholas H. Dodman, BVMS, DACVB, DACVAA

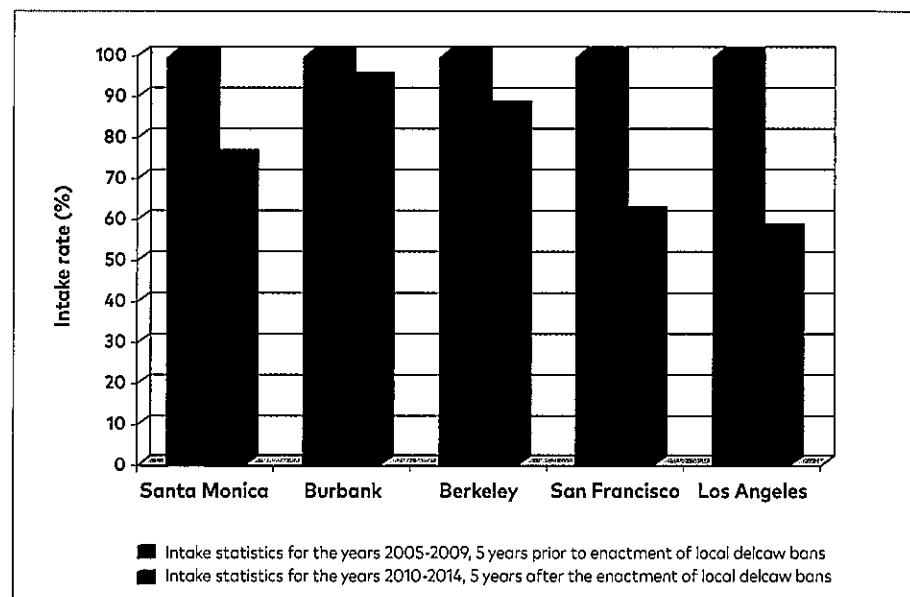
The Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association is pleased that the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) has amended its position statement to reflect disapproval of feline declawing (onychectomy). According to the current statement, AVMA "discourages the declawing of cats as an elective procedure and supports nonsurgical alternatives," stressing that "onychectomy is a surgical amputation and, if performed, multimodal perioperative pain management must be utilized."<sup>1</sup>

The AVMA is moving closer to the position of our many international colleagues who have expressed strong disapproval of declawing cats by making the procedure illegal in their countries.

## Declawing frowned upon worldwide

In the United Kingdom, declawing was banned in 2006; anyone convicted of declawing a cat could face up to a year in prison and/or a fine of £20,000 (just over \$26,000).<sup>2</sup> Across continental Europe, the procedure is forbidden by the European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals. It is also illegal or discouraged in many other countries, including Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, and Israel.

According to the Australian Veterinary Association's policy on surgical alteration of companion animals' natural functions for human convenience, declawing of cats is not supported or recommended because it is a type of surgery



Shelter intake rates before and after enactment of local cat declawing bans in California cities show that banning this procedure does not result in increased relinquishment to shelters. Data compiled by Paw Project; used with permission.

that does not benefit animals.<sup>3</sup> This is consistent with policies of other Antipodean animal welfare organizations, including the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Australia.<sup>4</sup>

We no longer need to feel conflicted or embarrassed by rejecting a practice that a majority of our international veterinary peers already eschew on the grounds that it causes dysfunction, deformity, and long-term pain, and is simply inhumane.<sup>5</sup>

## Refuting the arguments in favor of onychectomy

Proponents of declawing invariably justify the procedure on utilitarian grounds, claiming that it would yield the greatest outcome for the largest number of stakeholders, but this position is difficult to defend. For

example, the longstanding AVMA debate on declawing cats was fueled by supporters who believe that a nondeclawed cat is more likely to be abandoned to a shelter by an owner with no tolerance for scratching/marking behaviors. Thus, cats would be "better off" declawed and remaining in their homes. But the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP)<sup>6</sup> and Canadian Veterinary Medical Association<sup>7</sup> refute this contention, citing a lack of evidence that declawing protects cats from relinquishment, abandonment, or euthanasia.

Examination of publicly available intake and adoption records from five California cities between 2005 and 2014—before and after declaw bans were instituted—shows no correlation between a ban on declawing and

increased surrender to shelters. In fact, fewer cats were surrendered after the procedure was banned (Figure 1). Additionally, data from the California cities show that fully clawed cats are no harder to place in new homes than declawed cats.

Cats do not benefit from onychectomy. Given that there are noninvasive alternatives, such as redirection of scratching behavior, environmental enrichment, and nail trimming or capping, it is difficult to support declawing on ethical or animal welfare grounds. Indeed, veterinarians who declaw cats may experience moral stress because they may feel they are acting against their values. This stress may contribute to psychological morbidity and even mortality among veterinarians.<sup>8,9</sup> Veterinarians can >>





# Pain and adverse behavior in declawed cats

Nicole K Martell-Moran<sup>1</sup>, Mauricio Solano<sup>2</sup>  
and Hugh GG Townsend<sup>3</sup>

Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery  
 2018, Vol. 20(4) 280–288  
 © The Author(s) 2017  
 Reprints and permissions:  
[sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav](http://sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav)  
 DOI: 10.1177/1098612X17705044  
[journals.sagepub.com/home/jfms](http://journals.sagepub.com/home/jfms)

This paper was handled and  
 processed by the American Editorial  
 Office (AAFP) for publication in *JFMS*



## Abstract

**Objectives** The aim of this study was to assess the impact of onychectomy (declawing) upon subsequent development of back pain and unwanted behavior in cohorts of treated and control cats housed in two different locations.

**Methods** This was a retrospective cohort study. In total, there was 137 declawed and 137 non-declawed cats, of which 176 were owned cats (88 declawed, 88 non-declawed) and 98 were shelter cats (49 declawed and 49 non-declawed). All cats were physically examined for signs of pain and barbering. The previous 2 years of medical history were reviewed for documented unwanted behavior such as inappropriate elimination and biting with minimal provocation and aggression. All declawed cats were radiographed for distal limb abnormalities, including P3 (third phalanx) bone fragments. The associations of declaw surgery with the outcomes of interest were examined using  $\chi^2$  analysis, two sample *t*-tests and manual, backwards, stepwise logistic regression.

**Results** Significant increases in the odds of back pain (odds ratio [OR] 2.9), periuria/perichezia (OR 7.2), biting (OR 4.5) and barbering (OR 3.06) occurred in declawed compared with control cats. Of the 137 declawed cats, 86 (63%) showed radiographic evidence of residual P3 fragments. The odds of back pain (OR 2.66), periuria/perichezia (OR 2.52) and aggression (OR 8.9) were significantly increased in declawed cats with retained P3 fragments compared with those declawed cats without. Optimal surgical technique, with removal of P3 in its entirety, was associated with fewer adverse outcomes and lower odds of these outcomes, but operated animals remained at increased odds of biting (OR 3.0) and undesirable habits of elimination (OR 4.0) compared with non-surgical controls.

**Conclusions and relevance** Declawing cats increases the risk of unwanted behaviors and may increase risk for developing back pain. Evidence of inadequate surgical technique was common in the study population. Among declawed cats, retained P3 fragments further increased the risk of developing back pain and adverse behaviors. The use of optimal surgical technique does not eliminate the risk of adverse behavior subsequent to onychectomy.

Accepted: 23 March 2017

## Introduction

The onychectomy procedure (declawing) is performed across the USA and Canada to eliminate the possibility of property destruction and scratches. Medical indications for the procedure include removal of nail bed neoplasms and paronchia. Some believe that declawing will stop the spread of zoonotic diseases to immunocompromised cat owners.<sup>1–3</sup> To avoid disease transmission from scratches, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend flea prevention, keeping cats indoors, away from strays and avoiding rough play with cats. However, declawing is not a recommended part of their strategy.<sup>4</sup> The documented increased biting behavior of declawed cats can lead to more severe disease in people than cat scratches.<sup>5</sup> In one study of cat-inflicted wounds

presented to an emergency room, none of the cat scratches resulted in infection, whereas 20% of bite puncture wounds became infected, with several requiring

<sup>1</sup>Feline Medical Center, Houston, TX, USA

<sup>2</sup>Cummings Veterinary Medical Center at Tufts University, North Grafton, MA, USA

<sup>3</sup>Department of Large Animal Clinical Sciences, Western College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada

### Corresponding author:

Nicole Martell-Moran DVM, MPH, Feline Medical Center, Houston, TX, USA

Email: [nkmartell@live.com](mailto:nkmartell@live.com)

hospitalization.<sup>6</sup> Cat-bite infection rates on hands can be as high as 30–50%.<sup>7</sup>

There are several surgical techniques reported for removing the claw, including scalpel and laser disarticulation of the distal phalanx and use of guillotine nail clippers to cut a portion of the distal phalanx, leaving the articular base with the deep digital flexor tendon attached.<sup>8–10</sup> There have been studies addressing postoperative morbidity in declawed cats related to the development of lameness, reluctance to ambulate, chewing at the digits, paw swelling, nail regrowth, postoperative bleeding, infection and persistent pain, among others.<sup>5,8–13</sup> The procedure remains a common practice in North America, although eight cities in California have banned the procedure from veterinary practice.<sup>14</sup>

Most veterinary associations do not recommend declaw surgery without first attempting to train the cat. The American Animal Hospital Association states that it is opposed to the procedure except as a last resort and if the cat's adoptability is in jeopardy.<sup>15</sup> The American Association of Feline Practitioners' declawing position statement conveys the AAFF's strong belief that it is the obligation of veterinarians to provide cat owners with alternatives to declawing; also stressing the importance of normal scratching behaviors and acknowledging the possibility of negative side effects to the cat.<sup>16</sup> The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) opposes declawing wild and exotic cats for non-medical reasons,<sup>17</sup> but implies that declawing domestic cats is warranted after training methods have failed.<sup>18</sup>

An AVMA Literature Review on the Welfare Implications of Declawing of Domestic Cats, published in 2016,<sup>19</sup> states that veterinarians may choose to retain a part of the distal phalanx to improve function of the foot, citing a study from 1979. However, the standard of care in the past decade for performing an onychectomy, as determined by Diplomates of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons, is to disarticulate the distal phalanx from P2, to sever the deep digital flexor tendon and to remove the entire P3 (third phalanx).<sup>1,20–23</sup> Anatomically, the nail is a modified layer of the epidermis that encases the unguicular hood and unguicular process. It has two distinct portions: the cornified claw sheath, which surrounds the unguicular hood, and the horn, which encases the unguicular process. The nail grows from the root of the cornified claw sheath. If a portion of the articular base of P3 is left behind during a declaw, there will be no new nail growth as the articular base of P3 is not attached to the cornified claw sheath.<sup>24</sup> One study linked the presence of P3 bone remnants to claw regrowth,<sup>8</sup> but not to the amount of P3 remaining or to other pathological or behavioral findings such as back pain, biting or inappropriate elimination.

The long-term impact of declawing cats and the effect it may have on weightbearing adjustments, chronic pain

and other musculoskeletal diseases is unknown. Pain identification and management in cats has evolved significantly over the past decade. Cats manifest pain in a wide variety of forms, including, but not limited to, inappropriate elimination, flinching, increased body tension, excessive licking or chewing of fur (barbering) and other abnormal behaviors.<sup>25–27</sup> Musculoskeletal pain is the most overlooked cause of pain in cats given that they instinctively attempt to hide it, leading to owners' and veterinarians' inability to identify it.<sup>25,26</sup> Studies in human amputee patients have shown various sequelae, including back pain.<sup>28,29</sup>

In a PubMed search in June 2016 using the keywords 'declaw or onychectomy', no studies incorporating a modern pain assessment tool, with or without controls and aimed at revealing the presence of pain in declawed cats years after onychectomy, were found. One study identified a lack of a sensitive pain assessment tool in published declaw studies reviewed.<sup>30</sup> There is also a lack of published research in declawed cats with respect to the prevalence of long-term disease, other than nail regrowth, associated with P3 bone remnants. This is an important consideration given that an estimated 25% of the US domestic cat population is declawed.<sup>11</sup>

The purposes of this study were: (1) to determine if there was an association between the surgical procedure of declawing a cat and biting behavior, aggression, inappropriate elimination, back pain and barbering; (2) to determine the prevalence of P3 fragments remaining after declaw surgery; and (3) to determine if P3 fragments were associated with back pain, increased biting behavior, aggression, inappropriate elimination or barbering compared with declawed cats without P3 fragments.

## Materials and methods

### *Sample population*

The study population was comprised of a convenience sample of two cohorts of animals: declawed and non-declawed cats. The animals were sourced from two locations: owned cats presented to a veterinary clinic and relinquished cats housed in an animal shelter. Declawed owned cats were selected in sequential order of appointments in the veterinary clinic, no matter what the presenting reason, including wellness or diagnostic examinations, grooming, dentistry or received for boarding. Non-declawed owned cats were also selected sequentially by appointment until all of the declawed cats were age matched by year. Declawed cats from the shelter were included sequentially during routine examinations after relinquishment. Non-declawed cats from the shelter were chosen in sequential order of cages in the building based on age, by year, to match the declawed cats already represented in the study. The cages within the shelter were not divided by illness, reason for

touching, handling or light restraint (eg, petting, moving their position, lifting, and holding for nail trims or vaccinations) provoked attempts to bite.

A cat was listed as aggressive if a documented incident occurred during a veterinary visit or the owner reported unprovoked attacks by the cat when at home. Cats in a shelter setting were determined to be aggressive based on a history of attacking the owners, their children or shelter staff, or when a veterinarian documented that the cat had lunged at any person without provocation.

Inappropriate elimination behavior was determined by one or more episodes documented in the medical history in the previous 2 years, with or without a documented medical cause and included both periuria (inappropriate urination) and perichezia (inappropriate defecation). Inappropriate elimination in shelter cats was based on the listed reason for surrender being inappropriate elimination, or documented episodes of not using the litterbox while in a cage or free-roaming room. Cats with known urinary tract disease were not excluded from this study.

In this study, a cat was included in the barbering category when there was no evidence of a primary skin condition causing the hair loss and the behavior. Not all barbering cats were subjected to a full range of diagnostic procedures to rule out primary skin disease (ie, skin scrapings, food trials, blood tests). However, all cats included in the study were required to be current on topical monthly veterinary-obtained flea prevention. Any cat with visible evidence of fleas, a primary skin condition or potential for secondary endocrine cause (ie, hyperthyroidism) was excluded from the study.

#### Statistical methods

The two cohorts in the primary study were assembled after the outcomes of interest had occurred and therefore this was classified and analyzed as a retrospective cohort study. The cats were sourced from two locations, owned cats admitted to a veterinary practice and relinquished animals in an animal shelter. During the design phase of the study, age was assumed to be an important confounder in the relationship between onychectomy and the outcomes of interest. Therefore, at both locations, declawed cats and their controls were matched by year of age. The data related to all animals in the two cohorts were analyzed using  $\chi^2$  analysis and logistic regression (Statistix version 10). Initially, the univariate association of declaw surgery and animal location with each of the outcomes of interest (back pain, periuria/perichezia, biting, aggression and barbering) was assessed using  $\chi^2$  analysis. Subsequently, the combined association of declaw surgery and location, along with their interaction term (declaw surgery\*location), was assessed using manual, backwards, stepwise, logistic regression. With

this approach, each model was developed by starting with all three variables in the model and then manually removing them from the model based on the magnitude of their *P* values (highest *P* values removed first). Variables with *P* values <0.05 were considered significant and retained in the final models. In those instances where both declaw status and animal location were associated with one of the outcomes, confounding was deemed to be present if there was a 10% difference between the crude and adjusted odds ratios (ORs).

Primary analysis of the study data suggested that retention of P3 fragments in declawed cats may have had an impact upon the occurrence of adverse outcomes and that optimal surgical technique could be associated with fewer adverse outcomes. As a consequence, further analysis of the study data related to all 274 cats was undertaken by first assigning all study animals to one of three mutually exclusive cohorts – not declawed; declaw surgery leaving no P3 fragments; and declaw surgery resulting in retained P3 fragments – and then subsequently comparing the odds of adverse outcomes among the cohorts. Indicator variables were created for the three surgical outcomes so that declawed cats with and without P3 fragments could be compared with their non-surgical controls. The combined association of surgical status and animal location with each of the outcomes of interest was then assessed using manual, backwards, stepwise, logistic regression. Initially, both indicator variables for the declawed animals, along with their location, were entered into the models and then manually backed out based on the magnitude of their *P* values. Both indicator variables were retained in the final models if either attained a *P* value of <0.05. Similarly, animal location was retained in the final model when the *P* value was <0.05. Potential confounding and interaction were assessed as described above.

In order to determine if declawed cats with retained P3 fragments were at greater risk of experiencing adverse outcomes than those having the entire P3 excised, a secondary analysis that included only the 137 declawed cats was performed. As with the previous analyses, the potential effect of surgical status and animal location was assessed using manual, backwards, stepwise, logistic regression. Age was also included as a potential risk factor in this analysis. Variables were retained in the final models when their *P* value was <0.05. Confounding and interaction were assessed.

## Results

Among the 274 cats in the study, 137 had been declawed and 137 had not. There were 88 declawed and 88 non-declawed owned cats, examined at a veterinary clinic, and 49 declawed and 49 non-declawed cats examined in a shelter setting. The mean  $\pm$  SD age of the cats was 8.0  $\pm$  4.1 years (range 1–17 years).

**Table 3** Multivariate models of the association of P3 fragment retention with the occurrence of back pain and adverse behavior in 274 declawed and non-declawed cats

	Factor	OR	95% CI	P value
Back pain	Not declawed	Referent		
	P3 fragments: no	1.54	0.63–3.75	0.34
	P3 fragments: yes	3.94	1.99–7.84	<0.001
	Location	2.45	1.32–4.56	0.005
Periuria/perichezia	Not declawed	Referent		
	P3 fragments: no	3.94	1.68–9.26	0.002
	P3 fragments: yes	9.94	4.80–20.58	<0.001
Biting	Not declawed	Referent		
	P3 fragments: no	3.05	1.14–8.17	0.03
	P3 fragments: yes	5.51	2.42–12.54	<0.001
Aggression	Not declawed	Referent		
	P3 fragments: no	0.53	0.06–4.56	0.56
	P3 fragments: yes	4.7	1.61–13.71	0.005
Barbering	Not declawed	Referent		
	P3 fragments: no	1.67	0.38–7.31	0.5
	P3 fragments: yes	3.95	1.31–11.92	0.015
	Location	2.72	1.04–7.10	0.04

OR = odds ratio; CI = confidence interval

or barbering (OR 4.0), whereas declawed cats without P3 fragments were only at increased odds of biting (OR 3.1) and inappropriate habits of elimination (OR 3.9).

A summary of the data related to the impact of retained P3 fragments in the 137 declawed cats is presented in Table 4, and the final multivariate models are presented in Table 5. This secondary analysis revealed an increase in the combined odds of back pain (OR 2.7) and location in the animal shelter (OR 3.6) among declawed cats with P3 fragments compared with those without. Also, declawed cats with P3 fragments were at increased odds of demonstrating periuria/perichezia (OR 2.5) and aggression (OR 8.9) compared with those without retained P3 fragments. The age of the animal was not related to any of the outcomes ( $P > 0.4$ ). Neither confounding nor significant interaction were detected in this analysis.

## Discussion

Although illegal in most other developed countries, declawing is a common practice in Canada and the USA. There is little published information regarding the long-term health effects of declawing in the cat. The current study shows a clear association between declawing and the presence of deleterious side effects after the typical postoperative period in a comparatively large sample population.

The primary analysis of the cohort data comparing declawed cats and a non-declawed control group shows that the odds of the highly undesirable habits of elimination, periuria and/or perichezia were much greater in declawed cats than their controls. In addition, declaw surgery was associated with a significant increase in the odds of back pain, biting, aggression and barbering.

Although the causal relationship between declaw surgery and adverse outcomes has not been determined, plausible explanations do exist. Many cats express pain with a behavioral change such as biting, aggression or inappropriate elimination.<sup>25</sup> Clinically, we have observed that pain arising from the lower back is associated with inappropriate elimination. Similarly, if the source of pain is declawed phalanges, the act of walking on or digging in a gravel-type substrate may result in pain and aversion to use of the litter box. Many cats that eliminate outside of the litter box choose a soft substrate such as carpet, clothing or a location next to the litter box like a mat. With respect to aggression, following claw removal, a cat's only defense when upset or fearful is biting. When touched, a painful, fearful or stressed declawed cat may react by attempting to bite as it has few or no claws to scratch with. During the physical examination of the cats in this study, many biting attempts occurred when cats were lifted, creating an arched back; when they were touched or petted caudal to the middle thoracic vertebrae; or in anticipation of pain when a handler was reaching to touch the lower back or tail.

The removal of a cat's distal phalanges forces it to bear weight on the soft cartilaginous ends of the middle phalanges (P2) that were previously encapsulated within joint spaces. In this study, 11 declawed cats showed radiographic evidence of remodeling of the P2 bone. The significance of bone remodeling is unknown and was not explored in this study. There is currently no study that addresses the anatomic and pathologic changes affecting the P2 bone and cartilage that may incur over the declawed cat's lifetime. The potential for effects on the rest of the musculoskeletal system such as weightbearing among

remove bias from the study. At the time of the interpretation of the radiographs, the radiologist was unaware of the clinical signs or behaviors exhibited by the animals. Owners, shelter and clinic staff were not informed regarding the study hypothesis or the outcomes of interest. During the clinical examination of the animals, the 'signs of pain' table from the 2007 AAHA/AAFP Pain Management Guidelines for Dogs and Cats was employed in an effort to increase the sensitivity and specificity of the diagnosis of back pain.<sup>25</sup> However, the corresponding author (NM) was aware of the clinical status of the animals during the clinical examinations and while extracting information from the medical records. Also, owing to the retrospective design of the study, it was not always possible to be certain that the development of back pain or adverse behavior was preceded by the surgery. Despite these concerns, we believe that owing to the magnitude of the ORs reported in this study, the consistency of results with previous reports and the biological plausibility of our findings that this study provides strong evidence that declaw surgery is associated with adverse outcomes. Although there may be some inaccuracies in the estimates of the ORs, we do not believe that these will have been sufficient to negate or reverse our findings. All of the outcomes for this study were decided upon during the design of the study, and not after the data had been collected. Rather than discovering one or two weak associations, the ORs related to all hypotheses were substantial and statistically significant.

The association of retained P3 fragments with the occurrence of back pain has not been previously reported. Although the ORs related to back pain were among the lowest in the study, they were too high to be the result of biased data. The presence of back pain is neither a reported nor a plausible reason for recommending onychectomy and we do not believe it reasonable to conclude that biased clinical assessment can account for the magnitude of the OR related to this outcome; that is, that the investigator was 2.9 times more likely to diagnose back pain in a declawed cat than in a non-surgical control. With regard to the consistency and plausibility of our findings, pain and inappropriate behaviors have been reported as adverse outcomes following declaw surgery. Importantly, none of the adverse behaviors, including aggression (unprovoked attacks), have been reported in the published literature as reasons for having cats declawed. If cats prone to unprovoked attacks, a highly undesirable trait, were three times more likely to be declawed than other cats, this sequence of events would almost certainly have been reported. Finally, the greater impact of poor vs optimal surgical technique on the odds of back pain and adverse behavior is plausible and further supports our conclusion that declaw surgery is related to the development of adverse outcomes for cats.

The significant but independent increases in the odds of back pain and barbering observed among animals housed in the shelter compared with owned cats were unexpected. In fact, the prevalence of all adverse outcomes were numerically increased in approximately equal proportions in both declawed and non-declawed cats in the shelter compared with the home environment. A potential explanation for this finding may be related to increased frequency and expertise in observing and recording or reporting these outcomes by shelter staff compared with owners. Whatever the explanation, it is important to note that inclusion of the location term in the models did not result in significant interaction or confounding and, therefore, the ORs relative to the impact of onychectomy were similar across the two locations.

## Conclusions

This study found that declaw surgery in cats was associated with a significant increase in the odds of developing adverse behaviors, including biting, barbering, aggression and inappropriate elimination, as well as signs of back pain. There was a high prevalence of P3 fragments in declawed animals in this study and this was associated with an increase in all adverse outcomes in these animals compared with the non-surgical controls. As well, declawed cats with retained P3 fragments had higher odds of back pain, inappropriate elimination and aggression when compared with declawed cats without retained fragments. Although cats receiving optimal surgical technique had fewer adverse outcomes and lower odds of these outcomes being present, these animals were still at increased odds of biting and undesirable habits of elimination as compared with non-surgical controls. We propose that persistent pain and discomfort subsequent to declaw surgery is an important risk factor for the development of behavioral changes such as biting, aggression, barbering and inappropriate elimination. These are common reasons for the relinquishment of cats to shelters. In view of these findings, the ongoing practice of declawing cats in North America should be further questioned.

**Conflict of interest** The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

**Funding** This study was funded by the authors.

## References

- 1 Mison MB, Bohart GH, Walshaw R, et al. Use of carbon dioxide laser for onychectomy in cats. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2002; 221: 651–653.
- 2 Atwood-Harvey D. Death or declaw: dealing with moral ambiguity in a veterinary hospital. *Soc Anim* 2003; 13: 315–342.

# Declawing is Never the Answer

## Declawing is amputation – not a fancy manicure.



The  **Paw**  **Project**

# Paws to consider...

## Declawing Defined

Declawing is the amputation of cats' toe bones. It is not just a special manicure that can only be done by a veterinarian. The veterinarian must amputate each toe bone from which the claw grows in order to remove the claw. Declawing is one of the most painful surgeries performed by veterinarians, and yet it does not provide any benefit whatsoever for the cat. Declawing is cruel and is outlawed or considered unethical practice (*mutilation*) in many parts of the world.

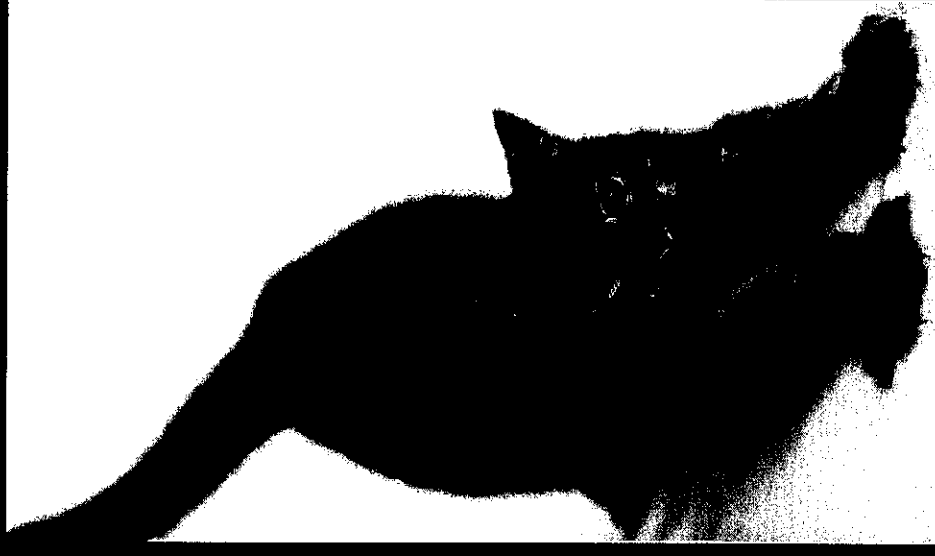
Tendonectomy, the severing of tendons to prevent cats from extending their claws and scratching, is also unacceptable. The claws can no longer wear down naturally and must be trimmed regularly to keep them from snagging or growing into the pads

## Declawing and Chronic Pain

Cats who have been declawed may have pain in the remaining portions of their toes. Digging in the litter box can be so painful that they stop using the box altogether. They may have difficulty jumping or even walking. Many cats resort to biting because they are no longer able to defend themselves with their claws.

## Declawing and Behavior

Declawing does not guarantee a cat will be allowed to stay in its home. Declawed cats may be more likely to be abandoned or relinquished to a shelter because of the problems in behavior known to be caused by declawing. Problems include avoiding the litter box and increased aggression (biting).



[www.pawproject.org](http://www.pawproject.org)

PO Box 445, Santa Monica, CA 90406-0445 USA

[info@pawproject.org](mailto:info@pawproject.org) T: 310 795 6215

Paw Project is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.  
EIN: 59-3782436, CA Corp ID: 26040



# Maryland Residents: Ban Cruel and Unnecessary Cat Declawing!

*March 7, 2022 - Posted by Cassidy Schulman*

Let's call "declawing" what it is: multiple mutilating amputations. Thanks to HB 22, Maryland has the chance to prohibit this painful and unnecessary surgery. This bill has already passed in the Senate. Please contact your state delegates to voice your support for HB 22. Your voice can make a difference for Maryland's cats!

"Declawing" is a euphemism for a surgery that in human medicine is more accurately called "fingertip amputation." Possible complications include hemorrhage, infection, nerve damage, retained bone fragments, and necrosis (tissue death). A human would only undergo this surgery as a last resort if they had suffered a severe crush injury. It would be unthinkable for surgeons to amputate the last bone of every finger of a human patient's uninjured hands! Not only would they lose their licenses to practice medicine, but they would also face criminal charges. Please contact your state delegates to save cats in Maryland from being subjected to this horrific procedure!





# Effect of a provincial feline onychectomy ban on cat intake and euthanasia in a British Columbia animal shelter system

*Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*  
 2022, Vol. 24(8) 739–744  
 © The Author(s) 2021  
 Article reuse guidelines:  
[sagepub.com/journals-permissions](https://sagepub.com/journals-permissions)  
 DOI: 10.1177/1098612X211043820  
[journals.sagepub.com/home/jfm](https://journals.sagepub.com/home/jfm)

This paper was handled and processed by the American Editorial Office (AAFP) for publication in *JFMS*



Alexandre Ellis<sup>1</sup> , Karen van Haften<sup>2</sup>, Alexandra Protopopova<sup>3</sup> and Emilia Gordon<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

**Objectives** The aim of this study was to determine whether there was an increase in cat relinquishment for destructive scratching behavior, a change in overall feline surrender intake and euthanasia, or a change in average length of stay in a British Columbia shelter system after provincial legislation banning elective onychectomy.

**Methods** Records of cats admitted to the British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in the 36 months prior to (1 May 2015–30 April 2018,  $n = 41,157$ ) and after (1 May 2018–30 April 2021,  $n = 33,430$ ) the provincial ban on elective onychectomy were reviewed. Total intake numbers, euthanasia and length of stay were descriptively compared between periods. Proportions of cats and kittens surrendered for destructive scratching, as well as the proportion of cats and kittens surrendered with an owner request for euthanasia, were compared using two-sample z-tests of proportions.

**Results** Destructive behavior was found to be an uncommon reason for surrender (0.18% of surrendered cats) during the study period. There was no statistically significant difference in the number of cats surrendered for destructive scratching behavior ( $z = -1.89$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ) after the provincial ban on elective onychectomy. On the contrary, the proportion of owner-requested euthanasias decreased after the ban ( $z = 3.90$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ). The total number of cats surrendered, the shelter live release rate and average length of stay all remained stable or improved following the ban, though causation could not be determined.

**Conclusions and relevance** The findings in this study suggest that legislation banning elective onychectomy does not increase the risk of feline shelter relinquishment – for destructive behavior or overall – and is unlikely to have a significant effect on shelter euthanasia or length of stay.

**Keywords:** Onychectomy; declaw; shelter; relinquishment; surrender; intake; euthanasia; welfare; destructive behavior; length of stay

**Accepted:** 14 August 2021

## Introduction

Elective onychectomy (declaw) is a procedure that consists of the amputation of the third phalanx (P3) of each digit. The procedure is generally requested by cat owners with the intention of avoiding damage to their property or personal injury from cat scratches.<sup>1–3</sup> However, evidence suggests elective onychectomy can be associated with lameness, acute and chronic pain, as well as an increased risk of back pain, house-soiling, increased biting behavior and barbering in cats.<sup>2,4–6</sup> Pain, lameness and changes in behavior can also be present in cats regardless of the method of amputation or anesthetic and

<sup>1</sup>Shelter Outreach Consultation Services, Calgary, AB, Canada

<sup>2</sup>British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Vancouver, BC, Canada

<sup>3</sup>Animal Welfare Program, Faculty of Land and Food Systems, The University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, Canada

### Corresponding author:

Alexandre Ellis DVM, Doctorate in Veterinary Medicine, Shelter Outreach Consultation Services, 51-3302 50th Street NW, Calgary, AB, T3A 2C6, Canada  
 Email: alex.ellis05@gmail.com

A primary surrender reason was recorded for each cat. The list of possible available surrender reasons in the shelter management software was edited on 1 January 2018, resulting in a limited data set for comparison between both periods. However, the category for destructive scratching behavior was preserved, so these data were compared for period 1 and period 2.

#### Statistical analysis

Shelter intake, LOS and outcome numbers are affected by many factors, and correlation would unlikely be owing to ban-related causation; therefore, these analyses were limited to describing data trends. The data set that was most likely to be primarily affected by an onychectomy ban with fewer confounding variables was the data relating to owner surrender for destructive scratching. The proportion of cats and kittens surrendered for destructive scratching was calculated for period 1 and period 2, and compared using a two-sample z-test of proportions. Likewise, the proportion of cats and kittens surrendered by their owners with a request for euthanasia was calculated for periods 1 and 2, and compared using a two-sample z-test of proportions. The alpha level for determination of statistical significance was set at 0.05. All statistical tests were performed using Stata Statistical Software release 14 (StataCorp).

## Results

The records for 41,157 cats admitted during period 1 and 33,430 cats admitted during period 2 were reviewed. Table 1 describes the characteristics of both cat populations during their respective study period. A total of 16,223 cats were surrendered during period 1 and 12,147 were surrendered during period 2, representing a decline of 25%. Surrender primarily for destructive scratching behavior was infrequent during both study periods, with 22 cats (0.14% of total feline surrenders) surrendered during period 1 and 28 cats (0.23%) surrendered during period 2. The proportion of cats and kittens surrendered for destructive scratching before the ban (period 1) was not statistically significantly different compared with after the ban (period 2;  $z = -1.89$ ,  $P > 0.05$ , mean difference  $-0.0009$ , 95% confidence interval [CI]  $-0.00197$  to  $0.000747$ ; Table 2). LRRs for cats surrendered for destructive behavior were 91% ( $n = 20/22$ ) and 89% ( $n = 25/28$ ) in periods 1 and 2, respectively.

LRR and average LOS for cats in this study is represented in Table 1, and yearly LRR over time for all cats

**Table 1** Comparison of shelter metrics between the 36 months preceding and following the ban on elective onychectomy

	Period 1 (1 May 2015– 30 April 2018)	Period 2 (1 May 2018– 30 April 2021)
Total cat intake	41,157	33,430
Adults	23,244	19,247
Kittens	17,913	14,183
Total surrender intake	16,223	12,147
Adults	8240	6277
Kittens	7983	5870
Surrendered for destructive scratching*	22 (0.14)	28 (0.23)
Adults	20 (0.24)	26 (0.41)
Kittens	2 (0.03)	2 (0.03)
ORE†		
Total intake	353 (0.86)	204 (0.61)
Total euthanized	321 (0.78)	193 (0.58)
Average LOS (days)		
Adults	17.5	13.3
Kittens	10.6	9.2
LRR (%)	89.84	90.23

\*Data are n (% of surrendered)

†Data are n (% of total intake)

ORE = owner-requested euthanasia; LOS = length of stay;

LRR = live release rate: total live outcomes/total

outcomes = (adoptions + outgoing transfers + return to owners)/

(adoptions + outgoing transfers + return to owners + [total euthanasia – owner requested euthanasia])

admitted in the shelter during the study period is shown in Figure 1. Yearly data on average LOS for cats and kittens can be seen in Figure 2. Yearly data on cat intake and outcome in the shelter is available in the table in the supplementary material.

The proportion of cats and kittens surrendered by the owner with a request for euthanasia before the ban (period 1) was higher than after the ban (period 2;  $z = 3.90$ ,  $P < 0.001$ , mean difference 0.002, 95% CI 0.00125–0.00370 [Table 3]). There were 353 cats (0.86% of total cat intake) and 204 cats (0.61% of total cat intake) admitted for ORE during period 1 and period 2, respectively. ORE numbers for both study periods were tracked and compiled; however, the primary reason for euthanasia was not tracked for the purposes of this study. Cats with a good adoption prognosis were redirected toward a relinquishment when possible. Occasionally, conditions were only identified as

**Table 2** Two-sample z-test of proportions of owner-surrendered cats and kittens owing to destructive scratching by period 1 (pre-ban) and period 2 (post-ban)

Variable	Mean	SE	z	P value	95% CI
Period 1	0.00136	0.000289			0.000790–0.00192
Period 2	0.00231	0.000435			0.00145–0.00316
Difference	-0.000949	0.000522	-1.89	0.059	-0.00197 to 0.000747

CI = confidence interval

without needing to resort to onychectomy. Overall LRR for cats surrendered for destructive behavior was 90% ( $n = 45/50$ ), which is in line with the individual LRR of both study periods, as reported in Table 1. These results suggest that, even in the rare cases where cats are relinquished primarily due to destructive behavior, this is not a significant barrier for rehoming purposes.

These findings are also consistent with studies showing that, in general, owner-related reasons for surrender are more common than reasons related to the individual animal.<sup>25,26</sup> A recent 10-year analysis of BC SPCA surrender reasons found that 83% ( $n = 55,128/66,694$ ) of feline owner surrenders were for owner-related reasons such as housing and financial challenges.<sup>27</sup> Many owners facing a surrender decision (88% in one study) would prefer to keep their animal if offered support.<sup>28</sup> While preventing shelter intake is the main objective for all animal welfare organizations, focusing veterinary resources on access to care, outreach services and preventative care is likely to have a much greater impact on preserving the human-animal bond within communities than maintaining elective onychectomy.

Both the shelter LRR (89.9% vs 90.2%) and the average LOS (10.6 days vs 9.2 days) in cats improved from period 1 to period 2. Correlations between the implementation of the onychectomy ban and the decrease in both LOS and LRR were not evaluated in this instance, as we could not establish a direct causative relationship between the implementation of the ban and this effect on shelter metrics, which might therefore be misleading. The decrease in overall cat intake starting in the spring of 2020 can be attributed, in part, to the COVID-19 pandemic, but these improvements overall are part of a trend that preceded the study period and can be seen in Figure 1, as well as the table provided in the supplementary material. This trend was driven largely by changes to shelter flow and population management initiated in 2012–2015 with the specific aim of reducing LOS and increasing LRR. These data suggest that banning elective onychectomy does not negatively affect cat adoptability.

Metrics regarding ORE were examined owing to the reported fear of an increase in euthanasia following the implementation of an onychectomy ban.<sup>21,23</sup> We found that, contrary to the fears, ORE decreased following the ban. However, these data must be interpreted with caution as confounding variables, including diversion of adoptable cats admitted as OREs to an adoption pathway, existence of community programs to support cat retention in homes, increased medical and behavioral treatment resources for shelter cats, access to veterinary care and human-related factors, all likely affected ORE numbers.

The overhaul of the primary relinquishment reasons in the shelter software at the time of the ban limited the analysis of some useful categories for relinquishment, such as inappropriate elimination or aggression toward the owners or other pets, and thus limited the scope of the study. House-soiling and aggressive behavior have

been reported as two of the most common behavioral surrender reasons in cats,<sup>29</sup> and in a 2018 cohort study onychectomy was associated with a 7.2-times higher odds of periuria/perichezia and 4.5-times higher odds of biting behaviors.<sup>4</sup> However, even with this information, it would be difficult to infer a direct causative relationship owing to the multifactorial etiology of both conditions. Systematic tracking of the onychectomy status of individual cats could have helped narrow down this population and determine if the ban could have had a protective or negative effect on relinquishment for these different subsets of cats. While this study does not account for cats rehomed directly by their owner or through other animal welfare organizations, the data analyzed do represent the majority of the animal shelters within the province and the study is, at the time of writing, the largest analysis of the effect of this legislation on shelter intake. While the province of BC is geographically and demographically diverse, it may not be possible to extrapolate this trend in all communities.

Shelters should consider consistently tracking data on incoming cats such as declaw status, surrender reason(s), outcome and LOS, which could allow comparison of shelter metrics and outcomes in different regions and demographics. Further studies analyzing relinquishment of cats or ORE due to inappropriate elimination or aggressive behavior toward their owners or other pets in jurisdictions where elective onychectomy is banned could provide further evidence regarding the overall impact of this legislation.

## Conclusions

This study found that a provincial ban on elective onychectomy in cats had no statistically significant impact on the number of cats surrendered for destructive scratching behavior to a province-wide shelter system. Additionally, ORE decreased following the ban, albeit a direct causative relationship could not be determined. Destructive scratching behavior was also noted to be an infrequent reason for cat relinquishment in the shelter. Overall, cat intake, LRR and average LOS all improved or remained stable after the ban, though causation could not be determined. These findings do not support concerns that an elective onychectomy ban could lead to increased feline shelter relinquishment or euthanasia.

**Acknowledgements** The authors are grateful to Michelle Hadikin for assistance with data retrieval and curation, as well as Bailey Eagan for sharing an analysis of British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals feline surrender data.

**Supplementary material** The following file is available online:

Table: Total feline intake and live release rate by year.

**Conflict of interest** The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.



February 6, 2023

Chairwoman Judy Aron and Members of the House Environment & Agriculture Committee –

I am writing on behalf of Dog Owners of the Granite State (D.O.G.S.) to thank you for your consideration of HB 231-FN, *prohibiting the removal of claws from cats*. On behalf of our membership of responsible local pet owners and breeders, D.O.G.S. respectfully **opposes** this bill.

HB 231 will make it *illegal for a licensed veterinarian to perform a safe and common practice designed to protect the safety and welfare of cats and avoid them ending up in a shelter and being euthanized*. This is not an issue of humane treatment of animals and actually legitimizes activist campaigns to unnecessarily restrict the rights of animal owners and veterinarians.

The AVMA discourages the declawing (onychectomy) of cats as an elective procedure and supports non-surgical alternatives to the procedure. **The AVMA respects the veterinarian's right to use professional judgment when deciding how to best protect their individual patients' health and welfare.**

We agree with the AVMA and always recommend working with an animal to curb bad behaviors before turning to a medical procedure. However, when all else fails and a veterinarian determines that declawing is the only remaining solution, that decision should remain a choice between owner and veterinarian.

If an owner has tried all methods available to cease scratching and have no alternative, if declawing was made illegal, their options will be to: abandon the cat, rehome it to an unsuspecting home, or surrender to a shelter. The likelihood that the cat will suddenly stop its behavior in a new home are little to none. This will start a vicious cycle and when the cat continues to be returned to a shelter, it will either live out its life there or the shelter will euthanize the cat to make room for a more adoptable cat.

However, if the cat was able to be declawed he could stay in his original loving home to live a great life.


**Veterinarian's Oath** from the AVMA website:

“Being admitted to the profession of veterinary medicine, I solemnly swear to use my scientific knowledge and skills for the benefit of society through the protection of animal health and welfare, the prevention and relief of animal suffering, the conservation of animal resources, the promotion of public health, and the advancement of medical knowledge...”

One of our members called 8 veterinarian offices when this bill was before this committee for the 2nd time last year, and half (4) say that they do not offer the procedure, so it is relatively unpopular. Those that will do it, say that they try to discourage the procedure and offer alternatives. A couple of the veterinarian offices who have performed the procedure related to me that it was done to support the health of the owner who was on blood thinners.

Let's let the veterinarians continue to educate their clients about declawing and not make anyone criminals when they feel it's best to perform this necessary procedure.

Again, thank you for considering my testimony on HB 231. We hope that you will vote this bill **Inexpedient to Legislate**, once again, to avoid implementing legislation that prevents owners and veterinarians from making the best choice for NH pets.

Sincerely,  Angela Ferrari, President, D.O.G.S.



**NH Animal Rights League**

Testimony for HB 231

**TO:** House Environment & Agriculture Committee  
**FROM:** Joan O'Brien for NH Animal Rights League  
**DATE:** February 7, 2023  
**BILL:** House Bill 231  
**POSITION:** SUPPORT

Dear Chairman Aron and Members of the House Environment and Agriculture Committee,

Today I represent the New Hampshire Animal Rights League in support of House Bill 231.

Once again, a bill to prohibit cat declawing comes before your committee. The fact that this legislation continues to be proposed speaks to how adamantly the citizens of New Hampshire want to see this practice retired through law.

During hearings for past declaw bills, much discussion focused on trying to establish how many cats in New Hampshire are subjected to this surgery. While it's understandable that the committee would try to quantify the extent of the surgery, for the individual cat whose body has been permanently altered, percentages are irrelevant.

We also heard from veterinarians who said that they have not performed declaw surgery in a very long time and actively discourage it. It would follow, then, that if the law were changed to formerly retire the procedure, it would have little impact on New Hampshire veterinary businesses.

As for concerns about making criminals out of veterinarians, any veterinarian who acts in the best interest of the cat would have nothing to worry about. If needed, the medical exemption is available. New Hampshire citizens are more concerned about the real and present danger to cats than the outside possibility that a veterinarian might be asked to justify a declaw surgery.

As long as this procedure is legal in New Hampshire, some people will still have it done. If passing this law could prevent even 10 cats from enduring this crippling surgery, why wouldn't we?

We urge the committee to support this bill so that New Hampshire can retire this harmful and outdated practice.

2/6/2023

Madame Chair and Members of the Environment and Agriculture Committee,

My name is Nancy Holmes and I am writing today from New Boston, NH in opposition to HB 231 a bill intended to prohibit veterinarians from performing declawing surgery on cats in this state. At least I think that is what it does, as the bill is not clear about who exactly it is intended to punish – veterinarians or people who own declawed cats.

I believe that choices in veterinary care should remain between the animal owner and their veterinarian. A veterinarian and owner currently can, in partnership, choose to determine if a procedure is right or necessary for a particular pet's wellbeing.

There are situations where, for a cat to remain in its home, declawing is the best option whether it be to protect the owner's health, or to prevent cruelty to the animal that is unable to conform to its owners needs or wishes in terms of how, when and where its claws are used.

There are cats who are easy to train to use their claws only on approved items. There are cats that are easy to handle for claw trims and the use of partially preventative items such as soft paws nail covers. There are cats that are so gentle with their owners you would never know they even had claws. And then there are the other cats... For those other cats the ultimate choice may be either to declaw so the pet can remain a part of the household or abandon, put permanently outside, euthanize the cat, or some may choose far less kind solutions.

Odds for rehomeing a cat that is so destructive or so willing to use its claws on people that the person who loves it wants to give it up are poor. A frequent recourse is lying about the behavior issues resulting in the new home ultimately resorting in turn to cruelty or abandonment etc.

Leaving a cat at a shelter may not be an option at all for some, given the cost of surrender fees, the long waiting list locally, and the fact that shelters have no interest in handling an aggressive cat for rehomeing.

In a peer reviewed American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) article from July 23, 2019 found at <https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/literature-reviews/welfare-implications-declawing-domestic-cats> and titled **“Welfare Implications of Declawing of Domestic Cats”**

This article in part states the following:

“In some cases declawing may be an alternative to relinquishment, outdoor housing or euthanasia.”

Outdoor cats are exposed to predators, street traffic, inclement weather, territorial disputes with other cats, and diseases (e.g., feline leukemia, feline infectious peritonitis). Owners may not consider keeping a scratching cat outside to be a viable alternative. Thus declawing may sometimes be necessary to ensure that a pet cat keeps its home.

An elderly person on blood thinners may not be able to keep a beloved cat if they are at risk for being scratched.

There is no scientific evidence found to support that declawing leads to a higher rate of behavior problems in cats when compared to a control group of cats that have not been declawed.

Supporters of the procedure assert that a properly performed declaw is no less humane than spaying/neutering.

Think about that. The same sort of surgical risks, pain, and permanent changes to anatomy and personality accompany surgery for spay neuter as for declawing. Those procedures too are done for owner convenience. I'm sure if you asked the animals they would prefer to not be altered. But we don't ask them. We decide with our veterinarians what we believe are the best practices in care to ensure the pet's status as our household companions. That partnership in animal care should not be broken by the legislature.

Do I think there are people who believe it is better to kill cats than declaw them – yes, I do. Do I think that is the right choice for everyone – no, I do not.

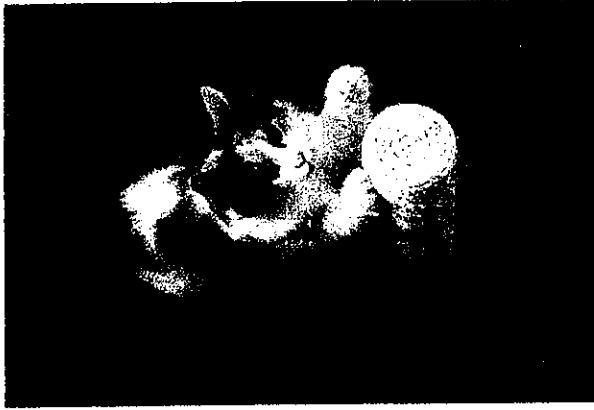
I believe leaving this decision up to the veterinarians of NH and the owners of the animals in question remains the best choice for owners and cats.

Please vote HB 231 inexpedient to legislate and leave veterinary medicine to the veterinarians and choices that let people keep their pets a viable option.

Nancy Holmes

New Boston, NH





## 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 wellbeing.

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. Scratching is important for a cat's physical and mental wellbeing.

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 to healthy and immunocompromised people alike, often requiring hospitalization. Declawing is not recommended by any human health agency.

6. Declawing doesn't guarantee a cat will remain in the home.

Declawing can lead to pain-related behavior issues like biting and avoiding the litter box. These behaviors increase the risk of the cat being evicted from the home.

7. Declawing is not performed in most countries of the world.

It's prohibited or considered unethical practice in most countries, including Sweden, Brazil, Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and much of the European Union and Canada.

8. A growing number of U.S. vets agree and oppose nontherapeutic declawing.

The American Association of Feline Practitioners and the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association 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!

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND AGRICULTURE**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION on HB 231-FN**

**BILL TITLE:** prohibiting the removal of claws from cats.

**DATE:** February 28, 2023

**LOB ROOM:** 301-303

**MOTIONS: INEXPEDIENT TO LEGISLATE**

Moved by Rep. Creighton

Seconded by Rep. A. Davis

Vote: 9-9

**CONSENT CALENDAR: NO**

**Statement of Intent:** Refer to Committee Report

Respectfully submitted,

Rep Barbara Comtois, Clerk



2023 SESSION

Environment and Agriculture

Bill #: HB 201-FU Motion: ITL AM #: \_\_\_\_\_ Exec Session Date: 2-28-23

Members	YEAS	Nays	NV
Aron, Judy F. Chairman	✓		
Creighton, Jim L. Vice Chairman	✓		
Comtois, Barbara Clerk	✓		
<del>Verville, Kevin G.</del> <u>Dolan, Tom</u>	✓		
Davis, Arnold G.	✓		
Brouillard, Jacob	✓		
Coulon, Matthew	✓		
Kenny, Catherine M	✓		
Potenza, Kelley L			✓
Smart, Lisa A	✓		
Bixby, Peter W.		✓	
Sofikitis, Catherine M.			
Dutzy, Sherry		✓	
Murray, Megan A.		✓	
Germana, Nicholas A		✓	
Haskins, Linda J		✓	
Howard, Molly C		✓	
Knab, Allison		✓	
<del>Morse, Corinne</del> <u>Davis, Fred</u>		✓	
Vogt, Robin		✓	
<b>TOTAL VOTE:</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	

**HB 231-FN - AS INTRODUCED**

2023 SESSION

23-0384

08/05

HOUSE BILL            ***231-FN***

AN ACT                prohibiting the removal of claws from cats.

SPONSORS:            Rep. Bordes, Belk. 5; Rep. Read, Rock. 10

COMMITTEE:          Environment and Agriculture

---

ANALYSIS

This bill creates a criminal penalty for declawing a cat.

---

Explanation:        Matter added to current law appears in ***bold italics***.  
Matter removed from current law appears [~~in brackets and struckthrough.~~]  
Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

*In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty Three*

AN ACT prohibiting the removal of claws from cats.

*Be it Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court convened:*

1 1 New Section; Removal of Claws from Cats. Amend RSA 644 by inserting after section 8-g the  
2 following new section:

3 644:8-h Removal of Claws from Cats Prohibited.

4 I. No person shall remove the claws of a cat by performing an onychectomy, partial or  
5 complete phalangectomy, or a tendonectomy, by any means, on a cat except when necessary in order  
6 to address the physical medical condition of the cat, such as an existing or recurring illness,  
7 infection, disease, injury, or abnormal condition in the claw that compromises the cat's health. No  
8 person shall remove the claws of a cat for cosmetic or aesthetic reasons or for reasons of convenience  
9 in keeping or handling the cat.

10 II. Any person who violates this section shall be guilty of a violation and subject to a civil  
11 penalty of \$500 for the first violation, \$1,000 for the second violation, and \$2,500 for any subsequent  
12 violation.

13 2 Effective Date. This act shall take effect January 1, 2024.

**HB 231-FN- FISCAL NOTE  
AS INTRODUCED**

AN ACT prohibiting the removal of claws from cats.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**     State             County             Local             None

STATE:	Estimated Increase / (Decrease)			
	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
<b>Appropriation</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Revenue</b>	\$0	Indeterminable Increase	Indeterminable Increase	Indeterminable Increase
<b>Expenditures</b>	\$0	Indeterminable Increase	Indeterminable Increase	Indeterminable Increase
<b>Funding Source:</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> General	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Highway	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

**METHODOLOGY:**

This bill establishes a violation level offense that may result in civil actions and penalties for declawing a cat. There is no method to determine how many charges, if any, would be brought as a result of this bill to determine the fiscal impact on expenditures. The Judicial Branch has indicated the potential cost per case for violation level offenses would be \$122 in FY 2024 (not including appeals).

**AGENCIES CONTACTED:**

Judicial Branch