

## Facts and Myths About Declawing

**Myth:** *I've heard that they cut off the cat's toes!*

**Fact:** Declawing is amputation of the last phalanx; essentially, it would be like removing the end of your finger beyond the last knuckle. However, the cats are not visibly disfigured after the procedure, as the phalanx that is amputated is normally retracted and not visible.

**Myth:** *I've heard cats don't use their litter box after being declawed!*

**Fact:** This is a common scare tactic from opponents of the procedure. Inappropriate elimination is a common problem in cats, but declawing is almost never the explanation for the problem.

Your cat's surgery appointment is scheduled for:

Please have him or her here by 8 AM on that date. He/she can have as much water as he/she wants, but no food after 8 PM the night before.

As your cat will have his/her feet bandaged overnight, discharge will be no earlier than 9 AM the next day from the surgery.

## Two Harbors Veterinary Clinic Cost and Policies for Declawing

### Declawing\*

< 8 lbs.	\$220.75
8-12 lbs.	\$244.00
12-15 lbs.	\$329.76
> 15 lbs.	\$444.77

\*Prices are lower when done concurrently with a sterilization procedure. Please ask for quotes.

All expenses are expected to be paid in full at the time of discharge.

### Explanation of Costs

Our clinic makes mandatory an intravenous catheter and delivery of IV fluids during gas anesthesia. We do this because it significantly decreases the risk of problems with anesthesia as well as gives us a route to deliver emergency medications should problems develop.

We also mandate aggressive pain control on our declaws. Each cat receives a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID) injection pre-operatively that will help it be more comfortable in the 24 hours after surgery. We also give a morphine-derivative injection to keep the cat comfortable when it awakens. After anesthesia is started, a local block is applied to the nerves that feed the toes, so the cat cannot feel them when he or she awakens. All cats go home on four days of pain medication; the heavier cats receive longer prescriptions to keep them comfortable.

We invite you to compare our charges to other clinics, but when you do so, make sure to ask if they provide the same level of anesthetic management and post-operative care. We feel that we do the most we can to keep your cat safe and comfortable.

Two Harbors  
Veterinary Clinic



## Declawing Your Cat



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There is a fair amount of confusion about the merits and drawbacks to declawing a cat. However, it will be one of the most important decisions you'll ever make for your pet. Because of this, we at Two Harbors Veterinary Clinic hope you'll take this information into account.

### **SHOULD MY CAT BE DECLAWED?**

This is not an easy question to answer. The fact of the matter is that almost every cat can be trained to scratch in appropriate places. However, much like toilet training a child, some get it faster than others. The issue at hand is whether you can tolerate some potential damage from scratching while you are training your cat to use the appropriate places. For a majority of cats, declawing will not be necessary.

However, the simple fact of the matter is that some cats don't train quickly. There is no question that the one-time cost of declawing is significantly cheaper than frequent reupholstering of furniture. Because over two million cats are euthanized at shelters each year, we will declaw cats, as we believe it helps them stay in homes that would otherwise be unable to host them.

### **WHAT DOES DECLAWING ENTAIL?**

The surgical procedure of declawing is probably one of the least understood procedures among cat owners. Declawing is the removal of the last phalanx of each digit. The equivalent on a human being would be amputation of the last knuckle of each finger.

Is this painful? Absolutely. There is no question that our doctors would rather not do this procedure if we did-

n't feel there was some benefit to it. As stated previously, the benefit is that more cats find loving homes.

Also, our clinic manages the discomfort very aggressively, using three different types of pain management drugs working through different pain pathways to try to keep our patients comfortable. We use a pre-operative injection that provides around 24 hours of comfort, along with a morphine derivative that provides immediate relief when the cat awakens. We also use a nerve block once the cat is anesthetized so that it will not be able to feel its toes when it awakens.

Furthermore, we send all cats home with a morphine-like drug, buprenorphine, that is very effective at keeping them comfortable for four days after the operation. With larger cats, we sometimes dispense up to two to three weeks of this drug (hence the increased cost).

Most cats do remarkable well with this pain management protocol, especially very young kittens. However, there are some cats that can take weeks, even months, to recover completely from a declaw procedure. This should be taken into account when deciding whether to have the procedure performed.

### **WHEN SHOULD MY CAT BE DECLAWED?**

Ideally, the younger a cat is declawed, the faster it will recover. Unfortunately, a cat owner that wants to avoid this painful procedure is left with a catch-22. One might commit to the difficulties of training the cat to scratch designated posts, and if this fails, the cat is subjected to the painful procedure at a later age when it will likely be more painful than if it had been done when he or she is only 4-6 months old. Also, waiting to declaw could result in the cat having to undergo anesthesia twice,

which certainly is not of benefit.

If you know for sure that you will want your cat declawed, we encourage you do it at the same time he or she is sterilized. This is a bit cheaper for you (because there is only one anesthesia charge) and it also only subjects the cat to one episode of anesthesia and recovery. This doesn't mean that every cat undergoing a spay or neuter should be declawed at the same time. However, there are merits to doing so, if you are committed to declawing.

Be sure to ask one of our staff about training techniques to avoid declawing if you wish to do so. There are numerous hints we can give that may allow your kitty to keep his or her claws!

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