

Feline Declaw

Patient Discharge Instructions & General Home Care Tips

What we have done for your Pet:

Your pet has recently undergone major surgery in order to remove his/her claws (toenails).

Pre-surgical examination - a physical examination, performed in order to help identify outwardly detectable medical problems which might indicate a need to modify or postpone anesthesia and/or surgery.

Hospitalization - all surgery patients are checked on periodically by the Doctor, before and after surgery. They are also monitored by trained veterinary staff who check their vital signs and tend to such basic needs as fresh water, clean comfortable towels to sleep on, etc.

General Anesthesia - required in order to perform surgery in a safe, ethical, and humane manner.

Surgery - the procedure of declawing involves the removal of the claw (toenail), and the supporting bone that it is attached to, from the end of each toe. It is customary to limit this to the front claws only. In that way, the cat retains his/her back claws and could still climb trees, fences, etc., if required, in order to escape predators. However, back claws can be removed if desired.

Pain Control Medication - In our observations, pets who receive post-operative pain relief seem to feel much better the next day. They eat more and they eat sooner, and therefore they seem to heal faster and return to normal sooner. They receive a preoperative pain injection & will need oral pain medication to be given at home.

The procedures outlined complete the technical aspects of the declawing of your cat. But that doesn't mean we're through. The rest of the job belongs to you, the owner. By following the guidelines, you will be able to dramatically speed up your pet's recovery from surgery!

What you should do to follow up at home:

The incisions from the declaw are held together with tissue glue. However, it's important to protect those incisions. This is especially important for a week following declawing! If your cat does not follow the below rules they will need to be cage confined.

- 1. We highly recommend an Elizabethan Collar "Cone" to prevent licking & chewing at sutures. *There will be additional fees if sutures need to be replaced with or without sedation.**
- 2. Offer your pet normal amounts of food and water when you get home, but realize that appetite may not be completely normal for a day or two.**
- 3. Outdoor cats should be confined indoors for the next ten (10) days so that their recovery may be more accurately and consistently monitored by the owner, and so that the surgical site may stay cleaner.**
- 4. No running, jumping or rough play for 10-14 days to avoid bleeding from the paw. Excessive activity often leads to re-injury or serious complications. This means additional expense to you & added discomfort to your cat.**
- 5. No bathing for the next ten (10) days. Do NOT wash the feet or apply any type of topical medications without asking us first.**

6. **Do not give Aspirin, Tylenol, etc.** Over-the-counter pain relievers can be poisonous to pets. **We can provide safe pain medication if you feel it is needed.**
7. Use shredded paper or Yesterday's News in the litter box (instead of cat litter) for ten (10) days after surgery. This reduces contamination of the surgical sites.
8. Spot bleeding is normal for the first 24-48 hours! Expect that it will take about 2-6 weeks before the cat walks completely normally. Your cat may favor his/her paws for up to 2 months after their surgery. The younger the cat, the quicker the recovery.

- **Complications** - Notify the hospital if any of the following occur:

1. Vomiting after 24 hours at home.
2. Diarrhea.
3. Refusal to eat after 24 hours at home.
4. Signs of severe pain. (Some discomfort is normal).
5. Consistent refusal to bear weight on one paw or the other.
6. Excessive licking or chewing at the toes.
7. Persistent swelling, bleeding, discharge, or foul odor from the surgery sites (toes).
8. Failure to walk normally by 14 days post-surgery.
9. Your pet acts odd or seems "not right" in any other way.

- **Lickers, Chewers, and Infected toes** - occasionally pets will lick and chew at their surgical sites (toes) to excess. Since little tongues and teeth can do a lot of damage in just a short time, this must be prevented. If your pet continues to lick and/or chew at his or her toes, it will be necessary to fit him/her with an Elizabethan Collar until the surgical wounds are healed. These are available at nominal extra cost.

*Despite our best efforts, occasionally cats will manage to get their surgical wounds (toes) open and infected. This is nearly always due to over activity, excessive jumping or climbing, and/or excessive licking and chewing at the toes. Do your best to prevent this. Please contact the hospital at once if your pet's toes may have become infected. Post-op rechecks are performed at no charge. Infected toes are repaired and treated at a nominal extra cost. Declawing is probably the single most important surgical procedure (other than spay/neuter) that will help ensure a satisfactory relationship between the cat and its owner.

X _____ Date _____