

LASER FELINE DECLAWS

Declawing a cat is an elective surgical procedure that can be performed by your veterinarian. While it is normal for cats to scratch things (to mark territory as well as to condition their claws) this behavior can destroy furniture and the bond between an owner and cat. Cats, especially adolescent cats, have a tendency to play rough, scratching their owners in play, sometimes violently. Usually only the front claws need to be removed. This procedure can be performed at the same time as the spay or neuter.

Without claws, a cat has lost an important part of its defense system. Declawed cats should be housed indoors only. Indoor/outdoor cats should not be declawed.

The declaw procedure involves the surgeon removing the last bone of the digit so the claw does not re-grow. At the Ashland Veterinary Clinic, all declaws are performed using our surgical laser. The incision is either sewn closed with suture material or closed in surgical glue.

What to Expect / Possible Complications

- One night in the hospital is required for this procedure.
- Some spotting of blood is normal from the toes during the first few days at home (beware if white carpeting is present)
- Shredded paper or pelleted recycled newspaper litter (such as Yesterday's News®) is required for 2-3 weeks after surgery. Conventional clay or sand litters can impact inside the tiny incisions and cause infections. You can purchase Yesterday's News at a local pet store, Walmart, or Meijers and have it ready to use when your cat comes home from the hospital.
- Pain medication will be dispensed by your veterinarian for several days after surgery. The declawed cat will indeed have sore feet after surgery. The larger the cat, the more the discomfort and reluctance to bear weight. The recovery period depends on the cat and can range from 10 – 21 days.
- Since the procedure is a clean procedure (but not sterile due to the location), there is always a risk of infection. Signs of infection may include soreness, swollen toes, fever, lethargy, unwilling to walk on toes.
- The **single most important thing** you can do to help speed the recovery of your cat and decrease complications is to confine your cat (to a cage, small room, etc.) for the first 5-10 days to help the toes heal.