

Important Facts About Declawed Cats

by Annie Bruce, author of [CatBeGood.com](http://www.catbegood.com)

Contrary to what most American cat owners think, declawing does not “save” cats, training time, money, or sofas. It frequently does the exact opposite. Declawed cats can be expensive and dangerous to own because declawing is the number one cause of *litter box problems* and *biting problems*.

- Declawing is an amputation of the cat’s toes to the first knuckle of each joint. Declawing removes claw, bone, tendon, and ligament.
- A study published in the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association (“*Risk factors for relinquishment of cats to an animal shelter*”, by Patronek, Glickman, Beck, et al., JAVMA, 1996:209:582-588) found that declawed cats were at an *increased risk of relinquishment* to animal shelters. Among relinquished cats, 52.4% of declawed cats were reported to exhibit *litter box avoidance*, compared to 29.1% of non-declawed cats.
- From CourierPostOnline.com, February 1, 2003: “Eighty percent of the cats that are *surrendered* that are declawed are *euthanized* because they have a *behavioral* problem. . . . Declawed cats frequently become *bitters* and also stop using *litter boxes* . . . one or the other.” —William Lombardi, shelter director, Gloucester County, New Jersey.
- A study of 163 cats that underwent onychectomy (declawing), published in the July/August 1994 *Journal of Veterinary Surgery*, showed that 50 percent suffered from immediate postoperative complications such as pain, hemorrhage, and lameness; long-term complications, including prolonged lameness, were found in nearly 20 percent of the 121 cats who were followed up in the study.
- A study published in the January 2001 issue of the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association (JAVMA) found that 31 percent of 39 cats that underwent onychectomy or tendonectomy developed at least one behavior change immediately after surgery, with the most common problems being *litter box problems and biting*.
- A national survey of shelters from the Caddo Parrish Forgotten Felines and Friends indicates that approximately 70 percent of cats turned in to shelters for *behavioral* problems are declawed.
- From the Summer 2002 issue of PETA’s *Animal Times*: “A survey by a Delaware animal shelter showed that more than 75 percent of the cats *turned in* for avoiding their *litter boxes* had been declawed.”
- According to a study published in the October 2001 issue of JAVMA by Dr. Gary J. Patronek, VMD, PhD, “declawed cats were at an increased risk of *relinquishment*.”
- In three years of experience as a cat owner consultant, Annie Bruce (author of *Cat Be Good*) received 95% of calls about declawed cats related to *litter box problems*, as opposed to only 46% of calls about clawed cats—and most of those were older cats with physical ailments. Only declawed cats cost their owners security deposits, leather sofas, and floorboards. And it’s mostly declawed cats that have been prescribed painkillers, antidepressants, tranquilizers, and steroids.
- Declawing is illegal or considered inhumane in many countries, including Germany, Switzerland, Japan, Norway, Austria, Scotland, Wales, and Portugal.

Note: “...*behavior problems... relinquished ... euthanized...*” are all the things that the American Veterinary Medical Association claim that declawing is intended to stop.

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