

The
Range Animal Hospital

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Advanced
Diagnostics, Medicine
Surgery, Dentistry, &
Trauma Care
for
Large & Small Animals

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Declawing your Cat

General Information

Scratching with the front claws is normal, instinctive behavior for cats. The purpose of this activity is to remove old, worn fragments of nails. Though scratching is normal for cats, this behavior can be destructive and costly in the home. For many cat owners, declawing is the only solution.

A declawed cat should be confined indoors as much as possible, since the claws are its primary means of defense. As long as the rear claws remain, they can still climb trees. A house cat has little need for defense and is a more suitable pet because it can no longer ruin furnishings or scratch people. Cats that have all 4 feet declawed must be indoor pets for the rest of their lives or go outside only under very close supervision.

The Surgical Procedure

Declawing (onychectomy) is performed under general anesthesia and consists of surgical removal of the nail bed. The feet are usually bandaged, and the cat is usually hospitalized overnight. After the bandages are removed, your pet will be able to walk normally, though tenderness may be evident for a few days or more.

Surgery? I'm scared!

With advances in surgery and anesthesia, veterinary surgery is **extremely safe**, and every precaution before, during and after surgery will be taken. Dr. Martinson, our staff surgeon, has over 20 years of experience in the operating room and has performed this procedure **thousands of times**. There are, however, a few simple procedures you can carry out at home to minimize risks and prevent unnecessary

problems.

Important Considerations Before Surgery:

This procedure can be done at any time in a cat's life, but they seem to recover more quickly if it is done while they are young, that is 10 to 16 weeks old.

Good nutrition is very important to reduce surgical stress and aids prompt recovery. If you have not already done so, discuss your cat's diet with the doctor or veterinary technician.

Your cat should be free of intestinal parasites (worms) and all vaccinations should be current before surgery. If you are in doubt, check with your doctor or veterinary technician before surgery.

If your cat is taking medication or has an existing health problem, inform the doctor or vet tech before surgery.

Anesthetics are best given on an empty stomach. Do not feed your cat for 8 hours before surgery. Water may be given up to 1 hour before surgery.

Important Considerations After Surgery:

Exercise: Restricting exercise is difficult. However, you should prevent your cat from jumping as much as possible for the first 5 days.

Bleeding: Occasionally a cat breaks open one of the small scabs where the nail was removed. A few drops of blood is OK, but the bleeding usually stops quickly. Call the doctor if bleeding persists.

Litter Box: Replace the normal granular clay litter with torn strips of newspaper or a pelleted paper litter for 10 days.

Bandages: They can be removed 1 or 2 days after the cat is released from the hospital.

Notify the Hospital if any of the Following Occur:

Your cat's feet appear swollen or bleed frequently.
Your pet is reluctant to walk.
There is a change in your cat's general health or behavior.
Your cat refuses to eat or seems depressed after the first day home.

Other things you need to know:

Dr. Martinson's technique requires no sutures. As a result cats declawed at the Range Animal Hospital **do not need to return for suture removal**.

Your cat will be admitted between 7:30AM and 9AM the day of the surgery. It will likely go home the following day between 7:30AM and 5PM, or 9AM and noon if it is Saturday.

I hope this information helps you, and please call 932-3531 or 1-888-380-6319 (toll free) for an appointment or if you have any further questions.