

**SKILLMAN - (214) 887-1400**

1910 Skillman Street
Dallas, TX 75206

OAK CLIFF - (214) 939-1600

1021 Fort Worth Avenue
Dallas, TX 75208

WHITE ROCK - (214) 324-1500

7446 East Grand Avenue
Dallas, TX 75214

DECLAWING

Ivan Alvarez, DVM

Congratulations you have introduced a new kitty to the household! Everything is going well, she is adapting to the new environment, is playful and you couldn't be happier. Then you start noticing scratch marks in your favorite sofa, your curtains or other furniture. You have tried corrective measures but do not see much of a response, then plan a visit with your veterinarian so see what other options can be done.

Scratching is a natural behavior for cats, they do so to mark their territory, to keep their nails nice and healthy and it also serves as a weapon to either hunt or to protect themselves. Declawing will disrupt this normal behavior and it involves much more than just removing the claws themselves. The medical terminology for declawing is onychectomy, meaning surgical removal of the third phalanx of a finger. If you are to look at your hand, a declaw would entail removal of the last section of your finger, where your fingernail lives. Currently the consensus within the veterinary community is to try different approaches to deter scratching. If your cat is attracted to a specific furniture we can put double sided tape, plastic wrap or aluminum foil over it – the stickiness of the tape and the unusual texture of the aluminum and plastic can gradually deter them from wanting to scratch at that site. Water sprayer/mist bottle can serve as a potential option, whenever we see our cat scratching, we can squirt them at a distance to deter the behavior. It is important though for them to not associate you with the water bottle, otherwise they can develop an aversion towards you as well.

If you do not want to have your furniture covered in tape or aluminum or you don't want to have your household covered in water, regular nail trimmings can potentially help. By keeping the nails as trim as possible, we can decrease the amount of damage done. On top of routine nail clipping, putting nail caps/soft paws over them can serve useful.

Last but certainly not least, is to provide plenty of spots where your cat can comfortably scratch such as scratching posts or cat trees, make sure they are sturdy, and you should have one per cat in the household. To make it appealing to your pet, cat nip can be placed near the posts. There are also great hormone products (such as Feliway®) sold as sprays or diffusers that can be applied directly to furniture or placed in a room where the scratching takes place to greatly reduce any stress/anxiety and reduce the scratching.

In conclusion, surgical removal of the bone and claw can be painful and can develop into severe chronic pain/discomfort. Because of the pain, further undesirable behaviors may develop such as biting and litter box avoidance. It is important to be familiar with the alternative options and use them as tools to correct undesired behaviors. 