

HB 22 Prohibition on DeClawing of Cats

BACKGROUND

Cat declawing is the amputation of the last bone of a cat's toes to prevent unwanted scratching. The surgery may be performed using guillotine clippers, scalpel blades, bone shears, or surgical lasers. Regardless of the techniques used, long-term physical and behavioral complications are reported.

An alternative procedure, tendonectomy, involves severing the tendons cats use to extend their claws in order to prevent unwanted scratching. The American Veterinary Medical Association acknowledges that declawing and tendonectomy are not medically necessary and further states that tendonectomy "is not recommended."

Trimming the claws, applying temporary synthetic nail caps, or training cats to use scratching posts are safe and effective alternatives to declawing, though some owners still are advised to have their cats declawed to protect furniture or for ease of handling.

EXISTING LAW

To restrict or regulate declawing and tendonectomy does not currently exist in Maryland.

Similar declawing bans have passed in thirteen U.S. cities and one state:

- West Hollywood
- Los Angeles
- San Francisco
- Berkeley
- Beverly Hills
- Burbank
- Culver City
- Santa Monica in California
- Denver, CO
- Austin
- St. Louis
- Madison
- Pittsburgh
- New York State

PROBLEM

Declawing is an elective procedure that requires an amputation, which can result in long-term physical complications, such as lameness, arthritis, and chronic pain. Furthermore, many cats are relinquished to shelters for behavioral issues, including biting and litterbox avoidance issues, two behaviors that have been linked to declawing.

The concern that banning declawing will result in more cats relinquished to animal shelters was not born out in the California cities that banned the procedure, where the number has actually declined. A published study showed that declaw bans do not increase the number of cats surrendered to shelters nor do they increase the use of euthanasia.

The American Association of Feline Practitioners state that there is no evidence that declawing protects cats from abandonment or death. The Center for Disease Control states that the declawing of pets is "not advised" to protect immunocompromised people against infection. Declawed cats are more likely to bite and cat bites are exponentially more harmful to people than scratches, causing hospitalizations.

SOLUTION - WHAT THE BILL DOES

- This bill provides that a person shall not perform declawing, tendonectomy, or specified procedures that prevent the normal functioning of an animal's toes.
- This prohibition does not apply to a procedure performed by a veterinarian solely for a therapeutic purpose to benefit the animal.

SUPPORTERS

Paw Project; Humane Society of the United States, Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association; Patricia H. Ladew Foundation; In Defense of Animals; Last Chance for Animals; Alley Cat Allies

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