

Testimony of Dr. Nicholas Dodman

January 19th, 2022

Environment and Transportation

HB22 - Animal Welfare – Declawing Cats – Prohibited Acts

FAVORABLE

Onychectomy

Declawing (onychectomy) is a horrendously painful and disfiguring surgery. It is positively inhumane and conducted solely for the benefit of the owner. It has no benefits for the cat, in fact, quite the opposite.

According to dictionary definitions, amputation of parts of digits is a “mutilation.” Merriam-Webster defines mutilation as “an act or instance of destroying, removing, or severely damaging a limb or other body part of a person or animal.” That’s properly describes declawing.

In one published study, fifty percent of cats were given postoperative opioids to control pain following surgery; the remainder would have benefited from pain relief. Pain relief in the post-operative period or for a day or so after surgery, as more humane veterinarians might prescribe, is inadequate. Many cats that are been declawed become withdrawn and inactive for 3 days after the surgery and over half do not recover from the trauma for much longer than that. Ten percent of cats require more than 2 weeks to “recover” and for some recovery is never complete. Operations have been developed to correct the deformities and chronic pain resulting from surgery.

The argument that declawing saves cats from surrender and euthanasia is false. In fact, house soiling, which is often triggered by declawing, as the cat has its litter replaced with shredded newspaper, is much more likely to get a cat surrendered. The argument that older cat owners with brittle skin and immunocompromised individuals are safer if their cat is declawed has been debunked by medical authorities, like the CDC, because declawed cats bite, which is far more dangerous, instead of scratching.

I urge a favorable report on HB22.