

TESTIMONY OF Dr. Jennifer Conrad

Maryland Cat Protection Legislation

This bill will protect countless cats from an unnecessary and nontherapeutic surgery that has become recognized as below the standard of care. Declawing, more appropriately called de-knuckling, is the full or partial amputation of the last bones in cats' toes. It performed on 20-25% of American cats. Let me tell you why this should end.

Please know that I would never tell you I was an expert in anything, except declawing. I am a veterinarian who has spent over 20 years studying the effects of declawing cats. Here are my conclusions: Declawing is not good for anyone.

1. Declawing is bad for the cat. Declawed cats are likely to face a lifetime of pain. Declawing forces cats to change the way they walk. They will never again be normal.
2. Declawing is bad for the owner. Declawed cats bite more and use the litter box less.
3. Declawing is bad for the veterinarian. It makes them break the oath, "Above all, do no harm." The industry recognizes that this surgery doesn't belong in practice. Declawing is no longer performed in the nation's largest veterinary chains and they report that their veterinarians, staff, clients, and patients are happier.
4. Declawing is bad for the community. Declawed cats often lose their homes at a high rate because of the behavior problems that arise due to declawing. Many shelters have to use taxpayer dollars to "euthanize" the discarded, declawed cats. In the cases where a rescue group takes the cats in, they are then burdened with using their precious resources to try to help these poor animals.
5. A declawing ban is good for Maryland. In all other jurisdictions where bans have passed, we have found that cats are keeping their homes and that's good for everyone.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration,
I respectfully ask for your yes vote.
Jennifer Conrad, DVM