



Lost
Our
Home
PET RESCUE

Lost Our Home Cat Adoption Handbook



Lost Our Home Cat Adoption Handbook

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Introduction

Congratulations! You've just adopted your new best friend from Lost Our Home Pet Rescue. Bringing a new cat into your home (and your life) is a big commitment, one that comes with many benefits and joys. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for making this very heart felt decision. Rescuing a cat from a shelter is a wonderful way to give a cat a second chance at life, and find yourself a new best friend.

In this adoption handbook we provide you with many resources and tips to help you get set up with everything you need to make the transition with your new best friend a successful one!



Thank You for Adopting!

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Vaccinations

Vaccines help prepare the body's immune system fight the invasion of disease-causing organisms. Vaccines contain antigens, which look like the disease-causing organism to the immune system but don't actually cause disease. When the vaccine is introduced to the body, the immune system is mildly stimulated. If a cat is ever exposed to the real disease, his immune system is now prepared to recognize and fight it off entirely or reduce the severity of the illness. **Remember, vaccinations are not an absolute guarantee against disease but will assist in reducing the severity of the disease if contracted.**

- All cats that enter Lost Our Home Pet Rescue are given the FVRCP vaccination upon intake.

| Age | Vaccination |
|-------------------|--|
| 20 weeks or older | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• FVRCP<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Vaccinate upon intake○ Booster after 4 weeks○ Booster annually• Rabies – Only if cat is going to a PetSmart Location |

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What To Do When You Get Home:

Cats are sensitive animals, greatly affected by changes in their environment and routine. Bringing your cat home can be a stressful experience. To make the transition to your household as comfortable as possible, select a quiet, closed-in area such as your bedroom or a small room away from the main foot traffic, and provide the cat with food and water, a comfy bed, some toys and a litter box.

For a few days, let your new cat become acquainted with this limited area. Let your cat explore on his/her own, sniff all your belongings and investigate all the hiding places. Never grab the cat and if his tail is swishing and his ears are back, don't touch him as he/she may need a few days to become comfortable in the new home. After a few days, slowly introduce the cat to the rest of your house, including the other pets and household members. If you have other cats, be sure to read the "Cat to Cat Introductions" section to help all your cats feel safe and secure. It will take a little while before your new cat begins to feel at home.

Cats that are given too much freedom too soon, are often overwhelmed and may hide underneath furniture until they get their bearings. This adds to the stress of the situation and makes the homecoming a less than ideal experience.



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What You Will Need:

| Necessities: | |
|---|--|
| Item | Information |
| Two Bowls: One for food and one for water | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opt for metal or ceramic bowls over plastic as they wear better over time and are less prone to tipping over. Cats also prefer these materials over plastic. • Cats should have access to clean, fresh food and water at all times. |
| Quality Cat Food | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide food made with quality ingredients and keep his diet consistent. • Feed your cat both wet and dry food. Most studies recommend you leave out all food for 20 minutes and then store it for later. You can refrigerate wet food, but make sure it's at room temperature when you feed your cat again. • Generally, cats should be fed twice a day (3 times for kittens). Cats and kittens can't go more than 2 days without eating. If your cat doesn't eat within 2 days, it's time for a vet visit. |
| A Sturdy Litter Box | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cats always need access to a litter box so they can go to the bathroom. • Clean litter boxes regularly to ensure your home and pet remain clean. • At least one litterbox per cat is recommended. |
| Extras: | |
| Item | Information |
| Cat Treats | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many cats appreciate a special treat occasionally. • Give treats in moderation, or your new pet will soon have a weight problem or tummy issues. |
| A scratching post made of rope or cardboard | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scratching is a normal, healthy cat behavior, and scratching posts (or similar devices) offer an appropriate place to scratch. Without a scratching post, cats may scratch furniture and/or carpet. Avoid posts made of carpet, as many cats can't differentiate between carpet on the post, or on your floor. |
| Cat Bed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cats prefer their own place to relax. Window perches and multi-level constructions are among many options that allow them to play or relax. |
| Toys | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toys keep cats them occupied and allow them to exercise. Providing toys of different shapes, sizes and materials helps relieve boredom and results in a happier pet. |
| Cat Carrier | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throughout your cat's life, you will have to transport him from one place to another, whether to the vet or to grandma's. To ensure a safe trip for your cat, keep him confined in a well-constructed carrier. |
| Cat Brush | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular grooming makes for a healthy coat, reduces allergens, and promotes bonding with yourcat. |

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Cat Proofing Your Home:

Cats are naturally inquisitive, especially in a new environment. Here are some tips to make your house safer for your new family member.

- **Electrical Wires** - Keep all wires out of reach – cats can be enthusiastic chewers and are not above chewing on electrical wires.
- **Sweets** - Chocolate is poisonous to pets. Sweets can also upset your pet's stomach and lead to diarrhea and vomiting.
- **Bones** - Never give cooked turkey, chicken, or rib bones as a treat. Cooked bones can splinter and cause serious internal injury.
- **Cleaning Products** – Keep all bleach, ammonia, drain cleaner, oven cleaner, paint, gasoline, rat poison, etc. in an area that cannot be accessed by a curious cat.
- **Plants** - Poisonous plants include lilies, philodendron, elephant ear, eucalyptus, spider plants, azalea, ivy, oleander, and plant bulbs. See the ASPCA website for a full list (<http://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/cats-plant-list>)
- **Personal Items and Medications** - Cosmetics, shampoos, skin creams, hair "perm" solutions, depilatories, suntan lotions, sleeping pills, antihistamines, aspirin, and acetaminophen can all be lethal to pets.
- **Electrical Items** - Watch out for hot irons, coffeepots, and space heaters.
- **Pools and Hot Tubs** - Keep covers on hot tubs and pools. Pets can fall in and may not be able to get out.
- **Miscellaneous Items** - Pets can be eating machines. Watch out for cigarette butts, rubber bands, balloons, sewing needles, thread, string ribbons, and even pantyhose. What goes in must come out, often via surgery.



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Introducing New Cats to Resident Cats

A carefully planned introduction is everything. Most cats do not readily accept a new member of the family. They need time to get used to the idea. It is important to have patience and not to rush the introduction.

Realistic Expectations:

- First, recognize and accept that you can't force your pets to like each other. We don't have a crystal ball to predict whether or not your pets will be friends, but we do have techniques for you to use to increase your chances of success. Most importantly, choose a cat with a similar personality and activity level. For example, an older cat or dog might not appreciate the antics of a kitten.
- You need to move slowly during the introduction process to increase your chances for success. You mustn't throw your pets together in a sink-or-swim situation and hope they'll work it out.

The Nature of Cats:

- Cats are territorial, and in general they don't like to share. A cat who is unhappy about a newcomer may express his displeasure by fighting with the other pet and marking territory (urinating on the floor, wall, objects, etc.)
- Cats also dislike change, and a new cat in the house is a huge change. These two character traits mean you could have a tough (but not impassable) road ahead.

Being Social:

- Some cats are more social than other cats. For example, an 8-year-old cat who has never been around other animals might never learn to share his territory (and his people) with other pets in the household. But an 8-week-old kitten separated from her mom and littermates for the first time might be glad to have a cat or dog companion.
- Be aware that the introduction process can take anywhere from a few days to a few weeks, or even a few months in extreme cases. Be patient.

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Confinement:

- To allow time for the newcomer to adjust to you and her new situation, keep her in a small room with her litter box, food, water, scratching post, toys and a bed for several days to a few weeks.
- Feed your resident pets and the newcomer on each side of the door to this room, so that they associate something enjoyable (eating!) with each other's smells. Don't put the food so close to the door that the animals are too upset by each other's presence to eat.
- Gradually move the dishes closer to the door until your pets can eat calmly while standing directly on either side of the door.
- Try to get your pets to interact with a toy. Tie a toy to each end of a string, then place it so there's a toy on either side of the door. Hopefully, they'll start batting the toys around and maybe even batting paws.
- Be sure to spend plenty of time with your new kitty in her room, but don't ignore your resident cat.

Make a Switch:

- To animals, smells are far more important than appearances, so you want to get your pets used to each other's scent before they meet face-to-face.
- Swap the blankets or beds the cats use or gently rub a washcloth on one cat's cheeks and put it underneath the food dish of another. If there are more than two animals in the house, do the same for each animal.
- When the pets finally do meet, at least their scents will be familiar.
- Once the new cat is using her litter box and eating regularly while confined, let her have free time in the house while confining your other pets to the new cat's room. It's best to introduce your new cat to a room or two at a time and increase her access to other rooms over a few days. This switch provides another way for them to experience each other's scents without a face-to-face meeting. It also allows the newcomer to get familiar with her new surroundings without the other animals frightening her.
- You can do this several times a day, but only when you're home to supervise. If you have to leave the house, put your new kitty back in her room.
- Next, after you've returned the cats to their designated parts of the house, use two doorstops to prop open the dividing door just enough to allow the animals to see each other.
- Repeat the whole process over a period of days—supervised, of course.

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Slow and Steady Wins the Race:

- It's better to introduce your pets to each other gradually so that neither animal becomes afraid or aggressive. Once the cats are face to face, though, there will be some kinks for them to work out.
- If you're really lucky (and your cats are inclined), they may do some mutual sniffing and grooming, and you're on your way to success. They may sit and stare at each other. You can provide distraction by dangling toys in front of them at the same time. This may encourage them to play together.
- They might sniff each other, hiss, and walk away. That's to be expected. This may go on for a few days or so, and then you'll probably find them both sleeping on your bed.

If Things Go Wrong - Breaking up a Cat Fight:

- Fortunately, most cats only posture and make a lot of noise. But, as soon as there are signs of increasing aggression (flattened ears, growling, spitting, crouching) make a loud noise by clapping your hands or throw a pillow nearby to distract them.
- If the standoff continues, very carefully herd them into separate parts of the house to calm down. This could take up to 24 hours and the cats may take out their stress on you.
- If the cats fight repeatedly, you may need to start the introduction process all over again and consider getting advice from a vet or animal behaviorist.
- **IMPORTANT:** Never try to break up a cat fight by picking one up; You're bound to get hurt.

Reducing Tension:

- There are other things you can do to help ease tension between feline roommates:
 - Have your cats examined by your vet before introductions to make sure they're all healthy.
 - Have one litter box per cat plus an extra one.
 - Try to keep your resident pets' routine as close to what it was before the newcomer's arrival.
 - Make sure all cats have a "safe" place to escape.

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Introducing Dogs and Cats:

Before Adopting

- Before taking the plunge, it's important to know whether the dog is a good candidate to live with a cat and vice-versa. The best possible indicator is confirmation that the dog has successfully lived with a cat(s) before and that the cat has lived with a dog(s).
- If there is no history of successful cohabitation, the next best thing is to gather history on the animals and "audition" them with the other species before proceeding. Dogs that are not well socialized to cats are likely to react to cats as though they were either other dogs or prey objects. This means they will try to play or will give chase. Sometimes they will do both, partly depending on what "role" the cat plays.
- If the dog is gentle, relaxed and friendly and is not much of a predatory type (i.e. doesn't chase cats or squirrels when outdoors), he is a good prospect to develop a relationship with a cat. Predatory types are much more stressful for cats and must be constantly managed when around the cat if they are to live with one. Predation is not something a dog can be easily trained not to do as it is deeply ingrained.
- When you introduce a dog to the cat, do it on leash, to avoid overly stressing the cat(s) and any flat-out chasing. If possible, use cats with dog experience – they are less likely to flee or be stressed. It's also good to try out the same cat on more than one occasion and to try out more than one cat. Good signs are cautious investigation and wagging, along with respect (i.e. backing off) for cat defensive signals. Bad signs are instant attempts to chase, out-of-control straining at the leash, whining, barking and agitation. Many dogs will fall somewhere in the middle, which will make your decision less clear.
- Sometimes, with diligence and perseverance, a dog with intense predatory drive can be taught to direct it at other outlets and to stick to carefully trained rituals and routines when around the cat, but this is tricky and does not work in every case. Dogs that are less intense are better prospects. It is important to know that dogs can and do sometimes injure and kill cats. Dogs that kill cats are almost inevitably highly predatory so often they can be picked out. A pair or group of predatory dogs is at greatest risk. It's also important to know that most dogs that chase cats are not in this category. They chase but do no physical damage if they catch or corner the cat. The psychological stress for the cat is still present with these dogs, of course, and

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is an important consideration.

Introducing Dogs and Cats (cont.)

- There is a range of temperament in cats and this is a factor that will influence the success of dog-cat cohabitation. In general, relaxed, laid back cats and kittens are the best prospects to accept a dog. They are also at lower risk to flee and trigger chasing, which will allow a social – rather than a predator-prey-relationship to develop. Shy, skittish and de-clawed cats are less rosy prospects. De-clawed cats feel more vulnerable and are more likely to display defensive aggression when cornered.
- Cats who have not been socialized to dogs will almost always behave defensively, by fleeing and/or with an aggressive display the first time they encounter a new dog. If the dog does not come on too strong and if the cat is given dog-free zones to retreat to, many cats will gradually get used to the dog and sometimes even become bonded.

After Adopting:

If you've decided to blend a dog and a cat in your household, here are some pointers:

- Have a "safety room" or rooms as well as high places the cat can access but the dog cannot. Baby-gates, cat doors and high surfaces can accomplish this. It is important that the cat can retreat to regroup and relax away from the dog and then venture forward into "dog territory" at her own pace. The cat should have access to food, water and litter in this area so no interactions with the dog are forced.
- Never force the cat (or dog) into proximity by holding her, caging her or otherwise restricting her desire to escape. This is stressful and does not help. Aside from it being inhumane, stress is a common reason for cats to break litter box training.
- For the first introduction, have the dog on leash in case he explodes into chase. If it seems to be going well, take the leash off and supervise closely.
- If the dog is behaving in a friendly and/or cautious way, try to not intervene in their interactions, except to praise and reward the dog for his good manners.

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Introducing Dogs and Cats (cont.)

- Interrupt any intense chasing and try to redirect the dog's attention to another activity – this is very difficult so you may be forced in the future to manage the dog on-leash around the cat until you have worked out a routine or divided up the house.
- In the first few weeks, observe the trend: are things getting better or worse? Monitor interactions until there is a pattern or plateau in their relationship.
- If the dog is the newcomer, be sure to give plenty of extra attention to the cat so she does not associate this change with reduced attention and affection. If the newcomer is a cat, it's also a good idea to make sure the dog associates the new intruder with good things for him.
- Dogs should not have access to the cat litterbox – it is too stressful for the cat and the dog may eat cat feces and litter. Most dogs will also eat cat food the cat leaves behind – we suggest feeding cats in the cat's "safe" room or on a high surface.

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Feline Household Destruction

Cats are typically pretty easy to live with but many people believe cats never need obedience training like dogs. While they may not need to learn to come when called or heel at your side, untrained cats can cause tremendous household, destruction. Destruction by tooth includes noshing on plants, and "Pica," which means eating inappropriate materials like dirt, leather or wool. Destruction by nail means using the furniture as a scratching post and the curtains as a jungle gym.

Feline destruction can be solved several ways: by managing the problem, by distracting the cat from the objects of desire, and/or by retraining. A combination of all three can solve almost any problem.

Plants:

- Houseplants often fall victim to young cats. For cats that love eating plants, consider turning tabletop plants into hanging plants or putting plants in one room that's off-limits to felines. You could also swap live plants for plastic and silk ones.
- If you move your houseplants to inaccessible areas, consider also growing catnip and wheat grass in easily accessible areas. Praise and reward interest in "appropriate plants." This should satisfy the cat's craving for fresh vegetation. If not, then add some string beans or fruit to your cat's bowl.
- Or you can attempt to retrain your cat by spraying plant leaves with an anti-chew agent formulated for plants, and attaching balloons or double-stick tape to planters. Cats avoid sites of loud noises (popping balloons) or surfaces that feel tacky to their touch.

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Feline Household Destruction (cont.)

Pica:

- If your cat is eating odd things like leather, dirt or wool, then have a veterinarian examine him to ensure he isn't suffering from a physical problem or metabolic imbalance. Managing the problem could mean keeping attractive objects in drawers, closets, and other closed containers. Also, distract your cat from desired objects by providing lots of playthings. Some experts believe chewing inappropriate items is a sign of boredom and isolation.
- Longer exercise sessions and rotating toys might bring about a welcome change. Introducing a second cat as a playmate may also help the problem, but only consider this if you truly desire a second cat. Adding cats to a household is stressful initially to the existing occupant, and may cause misbehaviors (e.g. fighting or inappropriate litter box habits) or stress-related health disorders (e.g. Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease).
- Attempt to retrain your cat through diet. Give him cat a premium quality dry food with adequate fiber in it. Feed only that food and no other supplements or treats, and keep the cat away from his former pseudo-food items for at least two weeks. After two weeks, douse the desired object with anti-chew spray and reintroduce it to your cat.

Scratching Furniture:

- To manage the #1 destruction complaint — scratching the furniture, ensure furniture and drapery materials are tactilely unattractive to cats (Generally most smooth cotton fabrics, like chintz, or silky fabrics, like parachute cloth, don't interest cats.) They prefer rough, bumpy, textured surfaces like Haitian cloth, Herculon, raw silk, and leather. If the furniture pre-dates your cat, consider using heavy canvas slipcovers or a comforter to protect your furniture. Of course, there are always plastic slipcovers for the truly desperate!

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Feline Household Destruction (cont.)

- Trimming the cat's nails every two weeks will keep them blunt and minimize the damage done by any errant scratching.
- To distract your cat from furniture, provide a scratching post. To remove dead nail sheaths around their claws, and allow new nails to grow out, cats have an inherent need to scratch. A sturdy, wide-based rough textured post that's at least three feet tall, and covered in sisal, burlap, or a similar rough fabric is best. Since the urge to scratch is strongest upon awakening, keep the post near your cat's favorite napping place or by a window.
- Scratching also marks territory. Cats often mark an item that's prominent in the territory, like the corner of a sofa or wall, as a visual signpost. Cats also have scent glands in their feet which mark items with their scent. (This is why declawed cats will "scratch" and mark items.) Initially, it's important to place a scratching post beside (or in front of) items your cat usually scratches, then move it slowly to the place where you'd prefer it to be. Retrain the cat not to scratch furniture by making them undesirable - cover them with double-stick tape, balloons, tin foil, or contact paper (sticky side out).
- The sound of human nails run over the scratching post often entices cats to the post. Praise the cat if they scratch when you do. Dragging a ribbon or other interactive toy over or around the post also attracts the cat. If your cat responds positively to catnip, then sprinkle a potent version on the post several times a month to increase its desirability.
- By providing for a cat's physical and mental needs, and keeping its environment stimulating with kitty greens, appropriate scratching posts, and challenging interactive toys, you can avoid much of the destruction caused by tooth and nail.

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Preventing Litter Box Issues

At least 10% of all cats develop elimination problems. Some stop using the box altogether. Some only use their boxes for urination or defecation but not for both. Still others eliminate both in and out of their boxes. Elimination problems can develop as a result of conflict between multiple cats in a home, as a result of a dislike for the litter-box type or the litter itself, as a result of a past medical condition, or as a result of the cat deciding she doesn't like the location or placement of the litter box.

Once a cat avoids her litter box for whatever reason, her avoidance can become a chronic problem because the cat can develop a surface or location preference for elimination—and this preference might be to your living room rug or your favorite easy chair. The best approach to dealing with these problems is to prevent them before they happen by making your cat's litter boxes as cat-friendly as possible. See our common litter-box management issues below, and our ways to make litter boxes cat-friendly. It is also important that you pay close attention to your cat's elimination habits so that you can identify problems in the making. If your cat does eliminate outside her box, you must act quickly to resolve the problem before she develops a strong preference for eliminating on an unacceptable surface or in an unacceptable area.

- Most cats prefer a fine-grained, unscented litter substrate (e.g., clumping litter). Boxes should be scooped 1 or 2 times daily.
- Clumping litter should be completely changed at least weekly and more often if more than one cat uses it.
- Clay litter should be changed a minimum of every other day (more frequently if multiple cats are using it).
- Wash litter box with warm, soapy water and dry well before adding new litter. The ideal number of litter boxes is one per cat, plus one.
- Litter boxes should be placed in at least 2 different locations, and preferably more if a multiple cat household.
- Locations should be private and have easy access. Boxes should not be placed next to noisy appliances.

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Preventing Litter Box Issues (cont.)

- Prevent blocking litter box exit or entry of one cat by another. Have at least two ways for cats to enter and exit the box.
- Never trap or corner a cat in its litter box to give it medication or perform other procedures that the cat may dislike.
- Many cats prefer a litter depth of approximately 1.5 inches; however, preferences vary. Cats prefer litter boxes that are at least 1.5 times the length of their bodies.
- Many commercial litter boxes are too small for larger cats. Sweater storage boxes, cement mixing tubs, and small dog litter pans (for dogs up to 35 pounds) all make excellent cat litter boxes.
- HELPFUL FACTS REGARDING URINATION AND DEFECATION: The average cat urinates twice daily (+/- 2), and defecates once (and up to 3-4 times in outdoor cats) daily. Some cats sniff and cover their eliminations; others don't. Both are considered normal behavior.
- Eliminating outside the box often signals an underlying medical condition. The earlier the problem is corrected, the better the chance for the cat to return to the litter box. Call your veterinarian to schedule an appointment

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A Word on Declawing

Although it is against Lost Our Home's policy to adopt a cat to a potential adopter who is considering declawing their cat, once you adopt, we basically have no control over what you do; however, if you are considering declawing your cat, please read this. It will only take a moment, and it will give you valuable information to help you in your decision.

First, you should know that declawing is pretty much an American thing, it's something people do for their own convenience without realizing what actually happens to their beloved cat. In England declawing is termed "inhumane" and "unnecessary mutilation." In many European countries it is illegal.

Here are some facts you should know. Declawing is not like a manicure. It is serious surgery. Your cat's claw is not a toenail. It is actually closely adhered to the bone. It is so closely adhered that to remove the claw, the last bone of the cat's claw has to be removed. Declawing is actually an amputation of the last joint of your cat's "toes". When you envision that, it becomes clear why declawing is not a humane act. It is a painful surgery, with a painful recovery period. And remember that during the time of recuperation from the surgery your cat would still have to use its feet to walk, jump, and scratch in its litter box regardless of the pain it is experiencing. Wheelchairs and bedpans are not an option for a cat.

No cat lover would doubt that cats—whose senses are much keener than ours—suffer pain. They may, however, hide it better. Not only are they proud, they instinctively know that they are at risk when in a weakened position, and by nature will attempt to hide it. But make no mistake. This is not a surgery to be taken lightly.

Your cat's body is perfectly designed to give it the grace, agility and beauty that is unique to felines. Its claws are an important part of this design. Amputating the important part of their anatomy that contains the claws drastically alters the conformation of their feet. The cat is also deprived of its primary means of defense, leaving it prey to predators if it ever escapes to the outdoors.

On occasion, declawing may lead to contracture of the tendons. This makes it uncomfortable for your cat to walk. To compensate for the missing parts of their front paws, they place more weight on their hindquarters. This causes your cat to become out of balance, and may lead to the atrophy of the muscles in his front legs.

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In addition, a cat's claws are its primary defense. Once declawed, there is no going back. You may think this is fine since your cat never goes outside, but what if he accidentally gets outside and you can't find him. Your cat is now defenseless in a potentially hostile environment.

Deprived of his claws, your cat may become insecure and distressed. If your cat becomes emotionally distressed, you will too. Cats tend to display distress by urinating outside the litter box (on that brand new carpet perhaps) and spraying. Cats may also become more hostile to people (including you) and other animals, and become more likely to bite.

Alternatives to Declawing

The good news is that there are safe and pain free alternatives to declawing:

- Provide your cat with a sturdy scratching post, preferably sisal or rope, that won't tip over when they go to use the post. Do not use the carpet covered scratching posts as this will confuse them and they may scratch your carpeting. Put the post in a favorite spot or place food, water, and toys near it to encourage use.
- You can clip your cat's nails yourself! The majority of cats are perfectly fine with you clipping their nails, although, it may be easier to have help with this task. Nail clippers can be bought for a few dollars and can often be found in the pet section at the grocery or any pet store.
- "Soft Paws" are another, relatively new option. Made of lightweight vinyl, these caps are placed over your cat's claws. They have rounded edges, so your cat's scratching doesn't damage your home and furniture, and come in a variety of colors.

Adapted from www.catscratching.com