



Bill S1209 (Singleton)/A347 (Murphy) Fact Sheet

I. Overview of S1209/A347

- Prohibits the declawing or flexor tendonectomy of cats or other animals in New Jersey unless medically necessary (therapeutic purpose).
- Therapeutic purpose is defined as “the necessity to address the medical condition of the animal, such as an existing or recurring illness, infection, disease, injury or abnormal condition in the claw that compromises the animal's health.”

II. What is Onychectomy (declawing)?

- Declawing involves multiple amputations - of the last bone of each of the cat’s digits – it is surgery and NOT simply removing the cat’s nails.
- The American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) states that it “strongly opposes the declawing of domestic cats,” noting that it is “major surgery involving amputation.”
- Declawing can make a cat more likely to bite or less likely to use the litter box (due to short or long-term pain in the paws)
- Other methods to prevent unwanted scratching:
 - Keep claws trimmed
 - Provide scratching posts
 - Ask a veterinarian about proper training and/or soft plastic caps (Soft Paws®) that are placed on the cat’s nails

III. Organizations in Support of S1209/A347

National Animal Protection Agencies

- Humane Society of the United States
- Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association
- The Paw Project
- Alley Cat Allies
- Last Chance for Animals

IV. Veterinarians Want to End Declawing

The Paw Project and the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association are veterinarian-run organizations that support legislation to end declawing.

“Let’s embrace this new wave of concern over the practice of declawing. Just as our profession once held a belief that animals don’t feel pain, and more recently thought it was acceptable to leave animals in pain if we needed to keep them quiet, let’s put this one into the history books where it belongs!” – Dr. Marty Becker, "America's Veterinarian" and the author of 22 books that have sold more than 7 million copies combined, including three New York Times best-sellers. The tragedy of post-declaw pain syndrome, and how to help cats who suffer from it. (December 11, 2015).

V. Declawing is Currently Banned or Considered Unethical by Veterinary Professional Organizations in Many Areas Across the World

- Australia
- Austria
- Brazil
- Croatia
- Germany
- Ireland
- New Zealand
- Norway
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- United Kingdom
- California cities (Los Angeles, San Francisco, Berkeley, Beverly Hills, Burbank, Santa Monica, Culver City, West Hollywood)

VI. Cat Health and Well-being

- Declawing does not keep cats in homes. It can lead to biting and avoiding the litter box. These are the top behavior reasons cats are given to shelters. The American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) states, “Declawing does not guarantee that cats will remain in households.”
- Los Angeles banned declawing in 2009. Every year since, L.A. Animal Services has seen lower numbers of cats given to its shelters than in the years before the ban.
- San Francisco’s Department of Animal Care and Control has recorded a 22% decrease of cats being placed in shelters following the enactment of their declawing ban.
- Vets aren’t declawing only as a “last resort.” “It is estimated that this procedure is done in 19% to 46% of the U.S. cat population.” (Clinician’s Brief)
- Regardless of the technique used to perform declawing or tendonectomy, post-operative problems may include: pain in the paw, bleeding, infection, tissue death, arthritis, loss of balance and back pain.
- Up to 50% of cats have negative effects right after being declawed. 20% have long-term problems (Washington State Vet Med Association’s Summary of Articles Studying Surgical Declawing of Domestic Cats).

VII. Human Health

Human health authorities agree that declawing is not an effective or reasonable means for protecting human health.

“Declawing is not advised”

Guidelines for the Prevention and Treatment of Opportunistic Infections in HIV-Infected Adults and Adolescents, The National Institutes of Health (NIH), Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) joint position paper

“Exercise caution when playing with cats to limit scratches; keep cats’ nails short (declawing is not recommended).”

Reducing the Risk of pet-associated zoonotic infections, Canadian Medical Association Journal (2015)

“You need not declaw the cat”

The Guide to Living with HIV Infection (5th Edition), Dr. John Bartlett, M.D., professor of medicine in the Division of Infectious Diseases at The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and past president of the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA). (2001)

The American Feline Practitioners Association (AAFP) has acknowledged, “Of note, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention does not advise declawing cats owned by HIV-infected persons...”

VIII Declaw Bans Do Not Lead to Increased Cat Relinquishment

Eight cities in California have declaw bans. Five of the eight have their own Animal Shelter Systems. IN ALL FIVE of those cities which do have shelter systems, cat intake numbers for their shelters have decreased, ranging from 6.5% to 43.3%, when the five years prior to the declaw ban and the five years after the declaw ban are compared.