



Paws Need Claws: Feline Scratching Solutions

Understanding natural scratching behavior, selecting proper scratchers, and humane nail care.

Why Cats Scratch

Scratching is an essential, hardwired feline behavior that serves three vital purposes:

- **Physical Claw Maintenance:** Scratching removes the outer dead husk of the claw, keeping the sharp, healthy claw underneath conditioned.
- **Marking Territory:** Cats have scent glands in their paw pads. Scratching deposits visual scratches and pheromonal territory marks that provide emotional security.
- **Muscle Stretching:** Scratching allows a cat to stretch the entire spine, shoulders, and forelegs, keeping muscles flexible and healthy.

Cats do not scratch out of spite, jealousy, or malice. Punishing a cat for scratching induces fear and damages your bond.

Setting Up Successful Scratching Posts

To redirect scratching away from furniture, provide scratching surfaces that meet feline physical needs:

- **Height & Stability:** A vertical post must be at least 32–36 inches tall so an adult cat can achieve full elongation without wobbling. A wobbling post will be abandoned immediately.
- **Texture Preferences:** Heavy woven sisal rope and corrugated cardboard are top favorites. Some cats prefer horizontal scratching pads, while others prefer vertical or angled ramps. Provide both options.
- **Strategic Placement:** Place scratching posts right next to prime furniture corners, near sleeping areas (cats love to stretch upon waking), and near high-traffic entryways.

Humane Claw Care & Management

- **Regular Nail Trims:** Trim the very tips of your cat's claws every 2–3 weeks using specialized feline claw trimmers. Avoid the pink vein (the quick). Reward with high-value treats like Churu.
- **Deterrents:** Use double-sided sticky tape (Sticky Paws) or clear furniture protector shields on targeted couch corners while rewarding post usage with catnip and praise.

Why Alaska Humane Society Opposes Declawing

Declawing is not a manicure; it is an amputation. The procedure amputates the last bone of each toe (equivalent to cutting a human finger off at the first knuckle). Declawing frequently causes:

- Chronic phantom pain, bone spurs, and permanent nerve damage.
- Litter box avoidance (walking on granular litter hurts newly amputated toes).
- Increased biting behavior as a primary self-defense mechanism.

AHS strictly prohibits declawing adopted cats under our adoption contract. We are committed to helping you resolve scratching questions humanely!