

"ASK Nanny Fran" Article Tropical Breeze - June 2004

Q. My kitten is scratching my furniture. I don't want him declawed. How can I correct this behavior?

A. You REDIRECT this behavior by providing scratching posts in a prominent location, preferably near a sleeping area.

One can purchase or build scratching posts. The post should be stable, on a secure platform, so the cat can rest on its hind legs and reach out to claw. Some cats prefer to claw a horizontal piece of carpeting (covered with catnip) and others prefer a piece at a 45 degree angle to the floor or totally vertical. Carpet remnants should have the back side facing towards the cat. One of my cats LOVES a platform I bought that has four wood posts as uprights and he nearly makes sawdust for me!!!!

Olfactory cues are effective also. Use an aerosol citrus spray, odor disliked by cats, which is sprayed at a 90 degree angle AWAY from its face. I REPEAT, "AWAY" from the face. NEVER spray directly into the cat's face. Then spray the furniture, usually the upright corners of sofas and chairs. All my furniture is covered with sheets simply to collect cat hair and they can be removed whenever company arrives. You could spray the sheets also, especially the backs of the sofa and arms. These areas are tempting to the horizontal scratcher.

Scratching is an extremely important action for a cat's spinal alignment, immune system and good health. It should never be discouraged; to the contrary, it should be encouraged. You will notice a digging in and then stretching of the entire back. It is often said that we humans would have fewer back problems if we stretched every single muscle slowly and thoroughly before arising. Cats do this naturally upon awakening.

Sticky paws (www.StickyPaws.com) is a humane deterrent and "Soft Paws" are plastic-like coverings glued over the nail.

Remember that declawing is mutilation...amputation. I can direct you to web sites to research the why nots of declawing