

RESOLUTION #3—2020
Regular Winter Session

Submitted by-
Board of Directors

REVISED POLICY ON DECLAWING OF DOMESTIC CATS

RESOLVED, that the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) adopt the following policy on Declawing of Domestic Cats to supersede the existing policy ([Attachment 1](#)) with the same name.

Declawing of Domestic Cats

The AVMA discourages the declawing (onychectomy) of cats as an elective procedure and supports non-surgical alternatives to the procedure. However, the AVMA respects the veterinarian's right to use professional judgment when deciding how to best protect their individual patients' health and welfare. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the veterinarian to counsel the owner about the natural scratching behavior of cats, the alternatives to surgery, as well as the details of the procedure itself and subsequent potential complications (e.g. surgical, behavioral, maladaptive pain). Onychectomy is a surgical amputation and if performed, multi-modal perioperative pain management must be utilized.

Statement about the Resolution

The policy on Declawing of Domestic Cats was adopted at the recommendation of the Animal Welfare Committee (AWC) in 2003 and revised in 2009 and 2014. The AWC re-evaluated the existing policy in accord with the every-five-year review directive. As part of the review process, numerous member and former member comments were considered. The proposed revision simplifies AVMA's position on onychectomy. Great care was taken to balance the fact that elective onychectomy does not directly benefit the cat and the reality that there are rare circumstances where declawing may be a valid option after alternative interventions have failed. The AWC concluded that AVMA could discourage the routine use of declawing to manage undesirable scratching while protecting the professional judgement of veterinarians. In those limited cases where onychectomy may be considered, client education and multimodal pain management are paramount. Additional information about the surgery, potential complications, alternatives, and related scientific articles are available as resources at avma.org/declaw.

The language of the revised policy is more consistent with the existing policies of the American Animal Hospital Association and the American Association of Feline Practitioners without opposing the procedure. Representatives of both groups were members of the AWC's assigned topical subcommittee that comprehensively reviewed the policy, with the AAFP representative serving as the lead for that topical subcommittee. The topical subcommittee's recommendations were supported by the entire AWC.

Financial Impact: None.

	Board of Directors	House Advisory Committee	Reference Committee #	House of Delegates
Recommend Approval				
Recommend Disapproval				
Recommend Referral to...				
No Recommendation	X			
Recommend Postpone Indefinitely				

(use this space for additional narrative, if needed)