

Scratching Needs



Key Points

- **Scratching is necessary**
- **Areas need to be provided for appropriate scratching**
- **Do not scold inappropriate scratching**
- **Declawing has been banned**

Normal Behaviour

Scratching with the front paws is a normal and necessary activity for cats. They need to perform this daily routine in order to remove the outer shell of their nails as they grow. It is also a territorial marking strategy, as it leaves behind a visual and pheromonal scent on the object. To provide a safe area where they can exhibit this behavior, it is imperative to provide at least 1 scratching post and 1 other area (cardboard, or old rug) that they are allowed to scratch. If there are no owner

approved areas for them to scratch then they may decide your couch is a good alternative.

Training aids

Scratching is a normal behaviour of cats and thus it is unrealistic to expect them not to scratch inappropriate objects. There are ways that we can redirect them to the desired area, but it will take patience. The first step is to consider if your cat likes to scratch vertical or horizontal surfaces. Once you have determined that, you will know what kind of scratch area is needed. Some cats will also prefer different surfaces, examples include rope, cardboard, or carpet. Either place the post/board near their eating/sleeping area or near an object that the cat is most likely to scratch inappropriately. Trimming the cats nails regularly may decrease the amount of scratching a cat will need to do. There are also products called Feliway and Feliscratch. Both are designed with the use of cat pheromones to promote the desired behavior.

When it doesn't go as planned

Punishment for inappropriate scratching does not work. Reinforce the desired behaviour with treats when they use the scratching post, or sprinkle some catnip around the base. Temporarily blocking access to certain items and redirecting to preferred locations is the best way to train a cat to use his/her scratching post. Declawing has been banned in most provinces, as it is the equivalent of removing the tips of your fingers. Please reach out to your veterinarian if you find yourself contemplating this option.

Visit:

www.FearFreeHappyHomes.com OR www.PacificCatClinic.com
for more tips and tricks on how to keep your home Fear Free.