

Phone Scripts

Phone Counseling for Inquiries About Declawing

Initial Inquiry

The practice should decide who will provide educational information to any clients requesting declawing. It is important to discuss responses with your entire team for consistency. Below are some examples of how to handle inquiries.

"Thank you for calling (practice name). This is (your name), how can I help you?"

Client – "How much does it cost to have my cat declawed?"

Practice – "May I first have your name and the name of your cat?"

Client – "Her name is (Meowington), and mine is (Janice)."

Practice – "Have we seen (Meowington) before, (Janice)?"

Client – "Yes/No"

Practice – "We actually don't perform declawing procedures here at (practice name), but we would really like to help you. I'm sure we can help find a solution that works for both you and (Meowington).

Do you have time today or tomorrow to speak with (Team member name) so they can discuss this with you and/or examine your cat?"

+ Follow-up Phone Call

Practice – "Hello, I'm (your name) calling from (practice name). May I please speak with (Janice)? Do you have a few minutes to discuss declawing, scratching behavior, and alternatives with me?"

Client – "Yes/No"

Practice – "Scratching is a natural cat behavior, but did you know that it is also a behavior that is very important for (Meowington)? Cat's need to scratch to maintain the necessary claw motion used in hunting and climbing, remove the old nail, stretch their body, and as a means of visual and olfactory, or scent, communication. Cats also seem to really enjoy scratching.

I know that you don't want (Meowington)'s scratching to harm your home and belongings. I have some great resources that I would love to share with you that can help train (Meowington) to scratch on more appropriate surfaces and stop causing damage to your home. For more information, please refer to the Client Resources.

Practice – Has anyone ever shown you how to trim (Meowington's) nails?"

Client – "No"

Practice – "We would be glad to show you how to trim (his/her) nails, or we can do it for you! Why don't you bring (him/her) in?"

Client – "Why don't you perform declawing procedures at (your practice)?"

Practice – "Since declawing is an elective procedure that is not medically necessary, we don't perform declaw surgery unless it is medically necessary, such as tumors or infection. Declawing entails the amputation of a cat's third phalanx [P3], or third 'toe bone.' Unlike human nails, cats' claws are attached to the last bone in their toes. A comparison would be cutting off a person's finger at the last joint of each finger. Would you be interested in learning more about all of the alternatives there are to declawing?"

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Client – “If you won’t perform the declawing surgery, then I’ll just take them to someplace that will.”

Practice – It sounds like you are frustrated, and I’m sorry that you are feeling that way. It can be very frustrating to have your cat scratching up your house. Declawing sounds like an easy solution, but it is a serious surgery that can have medical complications and/or cause life-long pain. We want to work WITH you to find a successful strategy for both you and (Meowington). We take our medical oath very seriously and must act in your cat’s best interest as well. Would you like to come in for a complimentary scratching consultation to see if there’s another way?

Additional Responses to Client Inquiries

My apartment/landlord says I cannot have a cat unless they are declawed.

This is quite disappointing to hear. Have you checked with City Hall/the municipality? Landlords certainly have the right to protect their property, but they cannot insist on what you do or don’t do to your cat. We’d be happy to provide information that you can share with your landlord, as well as counsel you on redirecting scratching (if appropriate), so you can demonstrate your efforts to both allow your cat to exhibit their natural behaviors and that you value your landlord’s property. For more information, please refer to Client Resources - Living with a Clawed Cat.

My cats stay inside, so they are safe from outdoor threats!

You are right that indoor cats cannot be hit by cars or get into fights with other animals unless they get out, but we still have to meet their behavioral needs so they can do the things that make a cat a cat. And sometimes, when cats aren’t able to exhibit their natural behaviors, they feel stressed and may direct that stress towards other actions such as scratching, marking, or house-soiling.

I have a baby/grandmother/live with an immunocompromised person, and I don’t want them to get scratched!

That’s understandable! Sometimes people believe that cats spread dangerous things through scratches. It is true that Cat Scratch Disease is spread via scratches, but the organism that causes this disease is found in flea dirt, so treating for and preventing fleas, will eliminate that risk. Trimming nails every 4-6 weeks really helps as well. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) does not recommend declawing to prevent transmission of Cat Scratch Fever. The CDC also does not recommend declawing to protect immunocompromised people. Instead, the CDC and veterinarians recommend regular nail trims, regular flea prevention, and avoiding rough play with cats. We recommend using an interactive toy and never playing with your hands or by wiggling hands or feet. Protecting children and family members from cat scratches is accomplished through gentle and proper handling of the cat, avoiding rough play, and trimming their nails regularly. Children should be taught to treat their cat with respect and to play with the cat using an interactive toy. Young children should have adult supervision when interacting with them. For more information, please refer to Client Resources - Playing with Your Cat and Cats & Kids.

