



## Worried About Destructive Scratching?

Cats love to scratch! It's a natural behavior that cats do to relieve stress, reduce frustration, mark their territory, defend themselves and while they play. And because cats' claws need regular sharpening, cats scratch on things to remove frayed, worn out claws and expose new, sharper claws. All this scratching can cause a lot of damage to furniture, drapes and carpeting!

### Tips to Reduce your Cat's Destructive Scratching

#### Scratching Posts

Finding the right scratching post is one of the most important steps to changing your cat's scratching habits. Most cats want a sturdy post that won't shift or collapse when used. Most cats also like a post that's tall enough that they can stretch fully. A tall sturdy sisal scratching post is ideal.

Each cat is an individual so trying different types of scratching posts may be necessary. Try giving your cat posts made of cardboard, carpeting, wood, sisal and upholstery. Some cats prefer horizontal posts. Others might like vertical posts or slanted posts.

#### Getting your Cat to Use the Scratching Post

Encouraging your cat to use their scratching post is the next step in curbing your cat's destructive scratching.

- Set up the post near the area they like to scratch. This could be your couch, table, door frames, etc.
- Sprinkle catnip over the scratching post or attach a toy to it to make it more enticing to your cat.
- FeliScratch  
This is a product that hits your cat's visual and olfactory senses, while also releasing pheromones
  - Week 1 - you will apply the blue dye to the scratching post each day for 7 days. The dye (visual) attracts your kitty to the post, the dye also smells like cat nip (olfactory)!
  - Week 2 - you will not have to apply the dye for the week
  - Week 3 and 4 - you will apply the blue dye once, and you never will have to again!
  - You will have to buy a new rope/sisal scratching post that is at least 3 feet tall to use FeliScratch

You can also discourage inappropriate scratching by setting up deterrents in places they're scratching. It's important that once your cat is deterred from the inappropriate area, they must be provided with an appropriate item to scratch.

- Put plastic, double-sided sticky tape, sandpaper or upside-down vinyl carpet runner on areas you want him to stop scratching.
- Cat caps
  - These are soft caps that slip over the cat's nail to prevent damage when they scratch
  - Getting them on takes practice, so your primary veterinarian may be a good resource to help apply the caps

### **A Note on Declawing**

Declawing can lead to medical complications such as pain and finger/limb deformities. Even if they're declawed, your cat will still need places to scratch in order for them to relieve stress, reduce frustration and mark their territory. It will be important not to let your declawed cat outside since they won't be able to appropriately defend themselves.

Due to the inherent risks, including complications from surgery as well as denying the cat of natural behaviors, we would highly consider seeking alternative solutions to declawing. Our behavior department would love to help you with your cat's destructive scratching as well. Feel free to give us a call!

### **What Not to Do**

- Do not hold your cat by the scratching post and force them to drag their claws on it. This practice could seriously frighten your cat and teach them to avoid the scratching post completely.
- Do not throw away a favorite scratching post when it becomes unsightly. Cats prefer shredded and torn objects because they can really get their claws into the material. Used posts will also appeal to your cat because they smell and look familiar to them.

**For more personalized behavior help, CAHS offers a free Behavior Helpline. Call or email the Behavior Department.**

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