

SCRATCH THAT!

PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT FOR DESTRUCTIVE SCRATCHING

Cats scratch in order to maintain nail health and remove dead cells from their nails, stretch their body and mark territory, visually and by leaving a chemical scent on the item(s). Nails are also important for maintaining balance, climbing and are used for self-defence. Keeping your cat's nails short is recommended but there is much more you can do! Here are some tips to help you set your cats environment up for successful scratching rather than destructive scratching:

VERTICAL VS HORIZONTAL

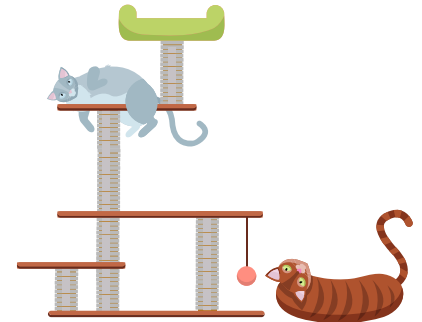
Is your cat a vertical or horizontal scratcher? Do they prefer the rug or the side of the couch? This is important to know so you can purchase the right alternatives, such as scratchers and scratching posts.

Both these items come in horizontal and vertical options as well as different substrates such as corrugated cardboard, carpet, sisal and other fabrics that could be appealing to your cat.



SCRATCHING EQUIPMENT

Place the scratching equipment you want your cat to use near the area they are scratching. This will help to redirect your cat to an appropriate scratching surface.



SCRATCHER APPEAL

Adding some honeysuckle spray or cat nip can help keep your cat attracted to the preferred scratching equipment. **Feliway** is a synthetic territorial pheromone that can be sprayed on surfaces you don't want your cat to scratch.



ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT

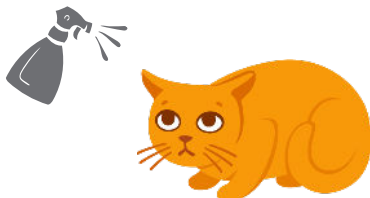
Ensure your cat's environment is enriched with food puzzle toys, elevated surfaces, hiding spaces and toys. This is important for your cat's overall health and well-being.



PUNISHMENT SHOULD BE AVOIDED

Spray bottles, yelling and/or hitting is not an appropriate solution to manage destructive scratching. These forms of punishment will cause your pet to be fearful of you and can increase their anxiety. Punishment also does not teach them what they are supposed to do instead.

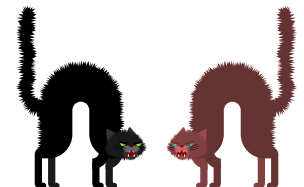
Redirecting your cat with a food lure or verbal cue to the appropriate area to scratch is recommended.



TENSION AMONG CATS

In multi-cat households where there can be competition for resources such as feeding stations, litter boxes and sleeping area, you can see an increase in territorial scratching. Each cat should have their own separate area for feeding, sleeping and litter boxes to avoid undue stress and decrease destructive scratching.

Increasing elevated spaces, such as cat trees and cat shelves also increases territory and is highly recommended.



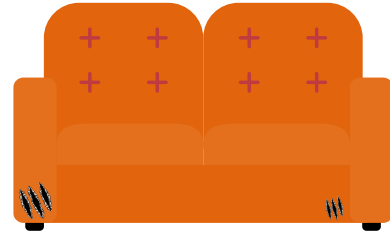
SOFT PAWS

Soft paws are covers for your cat's nail that can help manage destructive scratching. They are not meant to be a long-term solution but can help until your cat is scratching the desired surface and then removal should be considered. Many cats find the application of these aversive so ensure when putting them on for the first time that you are giving lots of treats, so your cat will make a positive association with the procedure. If you have difficulty applying soft paws your veterinary clinic staff will be happy to assist.



BLOCK ACCESS

Managing the space may need to be considered. If you have tried the above recommendations and your cat is persistently scratching the same area, blocking access to the area may be required.



A WORD ON DECLAWING

Declawing is prohibited by the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association. The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association finds declawing unethical, as it has lasting behavioural and physical effects on cats.



FIND A PROFESSIONAL

If you need help with your cat's scratching behaviour, speak to your veterinary team.



Destructive scratching can be troublesome and frustrating. Please ensure your cat has outlets for their natural scratching behaviour. The above recommendations can help prevent and manage this undesirable behaviour.