



Text File

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Committee: Committee on Public Safety  
Services

Status: Passed Finally

Ordinance amending the City of Pittsburgh Code, Title Six (“conduct”), Article III (“Dogs, Cats and Other Animals”), Chapter 633 (“Dogs and Cats”), by adding a new Section 633.25, prohibiting the declawing of cats.

**WHEREAS**, research has shown that declawed cats are more prone to defend themselves by biting more often and harder than their clawed counterparts and cat bites are associated with higher infection rates than scratches; and

**WHEREAS**, major health authorities, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Institutes of Health (NIH), the U.S. Public Health Services, and the Infectious Diseases Society of America, all agree that declawing cats to protect humans is “not advised”; and

**WHEREAS**, behavioral problems of declawed cats, such as increased biting and litter-box aversion, frequently can result in declawed cats being relegated to an outdoor existence to which they are ill-suited because, among other things, they cannot adequately defend themselves; and

**WHEREAS**, abandoned declawed cats often end up in the public right-of-way where they endanger themselves, where they can cause accidents and thereby imperil people, and where they contribute to Animal Care & Control, community cat rescue, and return to field program resource exhaustion; and

**WHEREAS**, declawed cats with associated behavioral problems also increase the number of cats relinquished to animal shelters, contributing to the already exhausted City of Pittsburgh shelter system; and

**WHEREAS**, declawed cats are generally not adoptable from shelters because of behavioral and other issues, and ultimately must be euthanized, thus contributing to shelter worker compassion fatigue; and

**WHEREAS**, onychectomy, or declawing, and flexor tendonectomy procedures are routinely performed on cats even though the procedures are painful and, cruel, and dangerous to cats and are very seldom medically necessary; and

**WHEREAS**, onychectomy is ~~not a cosmetic procedure but is instead akin to~~ amputation in that it involves the removal of not just claws, but also bones, nerves, joint capsules, collateral ligaments, and extensor and flexor tendons up to the joint; and

**WHEREAS**, onychectomy ~~this procedure robs~~ reduces cats’ of integral means of movement and defense, normal posture, normal use of toes in walking and running, and their ability to satisfy instinctive impulses to climb, exercise, and stretch; and

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**WHEREAS**, alternatives that pose no harm or risk to cats are readily available to protect furniture and other property, including regular nail trimming, training cats to use scratch posts, applying deterrent pheromone spray, covering furniture, restricting access to certain areas of homes, using plastic nail covers, and more; and

**WHEREAS**, the State of New York, ~~the County of St. Louis in Missouri,~~ **and** the American cities of Austin, Denver, Beverly Hills, Berkeley, Culver City, Burbank, San Francisco, **St. Louis**, Los Angeles, Santa Monica, **and** West Hollywood, ~~and the countries of England, Scotland, Wales, Italy, France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Norway, Ireland, Denmark, Finland, Israel, Slovenia, Portugal, Belgium, Spain, Brazil, Australia, and New Zealand~~ have all prohibited the declawing of cats within their jurisdictions; and

**WHEREAS**, all veterinary hospitals operated by Mars Veterinary Health, including VCA, Banfield, and BluePearl hospitals, no longer offer elective declawing procedures; and

**WHEREAS**, The American Veterinary Medical Association, ~~the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association, and the American Association of Feline Practitioners~~ oppose **discourages** declawing as an elective procedure; and

**WHEREAS, The American Association of Feline Practitioners and the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association oppose declawing as an elective procedure; and**

**WHEREAS**, Pittsburgh City Council finds that prohibiting these procedures, subject to exceptions necessary to protect the health of individual cats, will protect and promote the general health, safety and welfare of cats and humans alike.

**THEREFORE, the Council of the City of Pittsburgh hereby enacts as follows:**

**Section 1.**

Section 633.25 - Declawing of cats; Prohibited procedures and conduct.

*(a) Definitions.*

(1) *CAT*. Any member of the Felidae family (both domestic and nondomestic felines).

(2) *DECLAWING*. As used in this section, the term means any of the following:

(a) An onychectomy, dactylectomy, phalangectomy, partial digital amputation, or any other surgical procedure by which a portion of a cat's paw is amputated to remove the cat's claw.

(b) A tendonectomy or another surgical procedure by which the tendons of a cat's limbs,

paws, or toes are cut or modified so that the cat's claws cannot be extended.

(c) Any other method of permanently or irreversibly preventing the normal functioning of a feline's claws.

(3) *THERAPEUTIC PURPOSE.* This term refers to the necessity of addressing the physical medical condition of a cat, such as an existing or recurring illness, infection, disease, injury, or abnormal condition of the cat which compromises the cat's health. The term does not include a cosmetic or aesthetic reason or reasons of convenience for keeping or handling the cat.

(b) *Prohibition.* A person may not perform a declawing by any means on a cat within the City of Pittsburgh unless the procedure is necessary for a therapeutic purpose.

(c) Any person who violates §633.25(b) is subject to civil penalty of up to five hundred dollars (\$500.00), plus costs, for each violation. Each incident in which a cat is declawed or partially declawed in violation of §633.25(b) constitutes a separate violation.