



New York State Association of Veterinary Technicians

230 Washington Avenue Extension, Suite 101

Albany, NY 12203

Ph. (518) 694-0761

Fax (518) 463-8656

nysavt@gmail.com

www.nysavt.org

Memorandum of Opposition

A1303 (Rosenthal) / S5532 (Gianaris)

The New York State Association of Veterinary Technicians (NYSAVT) **opposes** Assembly Bill 1303 & Senate Bill 5532 which acts to amend the agriculture and markets law, in relation to the declawing of cats or other animals represents a significant change in the current law. The New York State Association of Veterinary Technicians is opposed to the amendment for the following reasons:

- Declawing is sometimes a cat owner's only option to keep the cat in their home. In the instance of an immunocompromised client where a cat scratch could cause medical problems, the option of declawing not only potentially saves the cat from being relinquished (or worse), but can also enhance the relationship between the owner and cat because the threat is no longer there.
- Making feline onychectomy illegal in NYS potentially raises the possibility of increased transmission of Feline Immunodeficiency Virus and or Feline Leukemia Virus as well as other communicable diseases among cats. This would result in owners deciding to release/dump them and be left unvaccinated, able to reproduce and suffer horrible fates.
- Declawing may be the only option for a cat owner to keep the cat in their home, currently there is no law restricting landlords from requiring declawed cats as a condition of tenancy.
- Putting this law into place may increase the number of unwanted cats in New York State. We already have an overabundance of cats in shelters and living in the wild. In Dutchess County alone there are more than 100,000 feral cats. Feral cats are typically not able to be handled, yet incorporated in this number of homeless cats are the cats that have been abandoned.
- A study published in the Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science ("Behavioral Reasons for Relinquishment of Dogs and Cats to 12 Shelters," JAAWS, 3(2), 93-106, 2000), it was documented that "aggression towards people and destruction in house" combined accounted for 29% of the 1286 cats in the study that were surrendered to shelters. Declawing is one option the owner and the veterinary health care team has for addressing those specific behavioral issues.
- According to the AVMA:
 - Scientific data do indicate that cats that have destructive scratching behavior are more likely to be euthanatized, or more readily relinquished, released, or abandoned, thereby contributing to the homeless cat population. Where scratching behavior is an issue as to whether or not a particular cat can remain as an acceptable household pet in a particular home, surgical onychectomy may be considered.
 - There is no scientific evidence that declawing leads to behavioral abnormalities when the behavior of declawed cats is compared with that of cats in control groups.

We would be in support of an informational handout to accompany the procedure that is adapted from current AVMA standards and based on current research. We feel strongly that client education is essential and feel just as strongly that onychectomy should remain a legal and accessible procedure in New York State.

...advancing the animal health industry