

## FELINE BEHAVIOR: SCRATCHING POSTS

Using claws to scratch is an instinctive, normal behavior for cats that provides physical and mental wellbeing. Appropriate outlets for scratching should be provided so your cat does not choose your furniture or carpet.

### WHY CATS SCRATCH

- Relieve stress, frustration and/or excitement
- Mark territory includes both visual and scent
- Nail care (sharpen and remove outer sheath)
- Stretching body
- Enjoyable

### SCRATCHING POST QUALITIES

#### PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES

Each cat may have their own individual preferences

- Vertical, horizontal, incline
- Flat or curved
- Rectangle, square or circular
- Tall enough so cat can stand and stretch
- Sturdy to avoid wobbling or tumbling over
- If flat on floor, aim for large enough so cat can rest on it
- MATERIALS: Sisal Rope, woven sisal, corrugated cardboard, carpet, tree bark

*Keep cat's nails trimmed to prevent getting stuck in the post*

#### WHERE TO PLACE

- Multiple locations
- Near your cat's resting places
- In rooms you are in more often
- Areas of increased tension

#### CREATE FUN EXPERIENCES

Even though most cats are drawn to a post naturally, encourage and reward use

- Treats
- Toy
- Sprinkle catnip on post
- Praise

### DESTRUCTIVE SCRATCHING

Destructive scratching usually defined by scratching on other household items such as sofas, chairs, carpet, wood floors or cabinets...basically anything that isn't a post.

#### WHAT TO DO

1. Redirect cat with toy or food lure to post
2. Re-locate posts and/or add new ones placed close to or not where cat is currently scratching
3. Use similar materials to what cat is scratching

*If persistently scratching one area, you may need to block access to that area until new habits are created*

#### AVOID PUNISHMENT

Using methods such as yelling, spray bottles or hitting is not an appropriate method to solve destructive scratching. These methods may (or may not) stop the behavior in the act, but they increase your cat's fear of you. In the meantime, the cat still doesn't know where to scratch.

#### ASSESS RESOURCES

Food and water stations, litterboxes, resting areas, scratching areas, elevated spaces, hiding spaces

- Location, Location, Location
- For multiple cat households, ensure multiple resource availability for each cat

#### INCREASE ENRICHMENT

Important for your cat's overall wellbeing

- Rotate toys
- Wand toy play
- Food dispensing toys
- Clicker training

Cats need their claws! Scratching is a natural behavior for cats. Did you realize declawing consists of the removal of claw and the first bone of each toe, comparable of removing fingertips at first knuckle. Ouch! The physical effects of chronic pain and change of gait, can not only be debilitating but it also leads to behavioral effects such as increased biting, increased anxiety and refusal to use the litter box. As of March 15, 2021, declawing is prohibited in Austin, TX. Education is power so **LET'S TEACH YOUR CAT WHERE TO SCRATCH!**