

## **Destructive Cats**

If your cat is chewing and scratching your house to pieces, he is probably trying to tell you something – that you aren't meeting his needs! Cats are naturally curious and need an appropriate space, such as a play center, where they can climb, rest and scratch to their heart's content. You should also provide toys for your cat to bat around; spring-mounted, dangling or bouncy toys are best. If you have an indoor-only kitty that has little access to grass or other vegetable matter, you may want to offer him lettuce or catnip to discourage him from chewing on your house plants.

### **Problem Areas**

If your cat continues to damage the same piece of furniture or area in your home, keep him away by using child locks, barricades or closed doors. If this isn't feasible or the problem persists, try using remote punishment, taste and odor aversion, or booby traps as deterrents. Physical punishment should never be used because it will teach your cat to fear you and it could exacerbate his destructive behavior because he will only avoid the problem areas when you are around.

### **Scratching**

Scratching is a normal behavior for cats – it allows them to mark their territory, condition their claws and stretch. To deter destructive scratching, provide your cat with a good scratching post, trim his nails regularly and keep him away from tempting furniture items and areas in your home. You can encourage your cat to use a scratching post by placing one near his favorite sleeping area and another in a prominent area in your home.

If your cat insists on scratching in an inappropriate area, place a scratching post in that area. You can use food rewards to encourage him to scratch the post rather than the inappropriate area. If your cat continues to scratch, you may also try covering the inappropriate area or furniture item with plastic or double-sided tape. Ask your veterinarian about plastic coverings that fit over your cat's nails as another option.

### **Declawing**

Declawing may be a final consideration only after you have sincerely tried to solve the problem but destructive scratching persists. AAHA recommends that declawing of domestic cats should be considered only after attempts have been made to prevent the cat from using his claws destructively or when clawing presents a significant health risk for people within the household. For more information about declawing, please read the Healthypet article [Declawing](#).

You should discuss all behavior modification and treatment options with your veterinarian to help you decide what's best for your cat and your family.