What is a declaw?
Feline declaw surgery involves the permanent removal of the nails (usually the front feet only). The surgery consists of the amputation of the toe bone up to the first joint and must be performed under general anesthesia. The procedure is usually performed to prevent cats from scratching individuals and/or damaging furniture or other items by scratching. Although commonly performed, declaws are major orthopedic surgery. Your cat will need special post-surgical care to recover as comfortably and quickly as possible.

Will my pet be in pain?
General anesthesia will be used throughout the procedure and your pet will be given an injectable pain reliever after the surgery. Your pet’s feet will be bandaged overnight and additional pain medication will be given during the hospital stay. Your doctor will dispense oral pain relievers and possibly oral antibiotics for you to give at home for the first few days to ensure that your pet is comfortable. Your pet may be reluctant to walk around, jump up on things or act sore. Some degree of discomfort is expected. In younger cats, pain experienced after the declaw procedure should lessen within 10 days and lameness (limping) should improve within one week. In older cats, this time frame may be longer. In all cats, due to individual pet differences, activity levels, surgical technique and choice of pain medication, these time frames may vary. Do not give your cat any type of human medication as this can harm your pet, and in some cases, cause death.

Banfield’s feline declaw policy
Declawing, or permanent removal of the claws, should be considered only as a last resort when the other strategies have been unsuccessful and in cases where a cat’s scratching would lead to the surrendering of your cat. The decision to declaw is a personal decision, made by individuals and families with input from many sources including past experience, family, friends, neighbors and their veterinarian. Banfield believes that when a cat cannot be trained to refrain from using their claws destructively in the home, or poses a danger to family members, declawing is an acceptable option to euthanasia or becoming an outdoor only pet. We believe declawing should be performed only with the medically appropriate use of anesthetics and analgesics, carefully adhering to surgical and post-surgical protocols. We believe that declaw surgery should only be performed on the front feet, and that after the surgery, these cats must remain as indoor-only cats.

In the end, the quality of a pet’s care is based on the strength of the bond between the pet and it’s family. If your cat is constantly being destructive in your home or poses a threat to your loved ones, this bond can be significantly harmed. We strongly encourage you to discuss the decision to declaw with your veterinarian, so that you might make an informed decision as to what is best for the future of your cat and your family.