

**ANIMAL
RESCUE
LEAGUE
of BOSTON**



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Bill to Prohibit Cat Declawing Signed by Governor

Massachusetts becomes 4th State to Pass Legislation to Ban Inhumane Practice

BOSTON, Jan. 10, 2025 — This week, on January 8, the Governor signed into law *An Act prohibiting inhumane feline declawing* (S. 2552), sponsored by Senator Mark Montigny (D-New Bedford).

The new law prohibits inhumane feline declawing, a procedure usually involving the removal of the claws and the first bone of the toes of a cat's front feet. The equivalent operation would involve amputating a person's fingertips at the first knuckle. This bill makes exemptions for procedures when there is a therapeutic need, such as removing a cancerous tumor from the nail bed.

Advocates celebrated the passage and praised the Governor, as well as the legislature for their ongoing commitment to protecting animals in the Commonwealth and noted this is the 5th animal protection law enacted this session. Also yesterday, the Governor signed S. 2908, a bill with provisions to ban the sale of animals under eight weeks and prevent the roadside/outdoor sale of animals.

Cat declawing frequently causes serious pain and behavioral concerns. In addition to the pain of recovery and healing, it is estimated that 50 percent of declawed cats experience post-surgical complications. Ongoing pain caused by declawing can also lead to behavioral issues, often so severe that families choose to surrender their cat. Declawed cats are four times more likely to bite and seven times more likely to develop inappropriate litter box habits.

A growing number of veterinarians refuse to declaw cats on ethical grounds, citing that it is an invasive surgery performed for a person's convenience and not a cat's wellbeing. Despite this shift, it is estimated that one in four veterinarians in Massachusetts offer or will perform the surgery.

Alternatives that resolve unwanted scratching behaviors include encouraging a cat to use scratching posts by rewarding scratching in the right place with treats, applying double-sided sticky tape to furniture and using citrus or pheromone spray. Owners can also help unwanted scratching by keeping their cat's nails trimmed.

In 2019, New York became the first state to ban declawing, followed by Maryland and Washington D.C. in 2022. Virginia passed a law last year.

“Declawing is an abhorrent practice that most veterinarians view as inhumane,” said **Senator Mark Montigny (D-New Bedford)**, a longtime legislative leader for the humane treatment of animals. “But it is also a procedure that is widely misunderstood and requested by owners. This law ensures that veterinarians will no longer have to weigh the choice of providing the procedure, knowing that if they don't an owner is likely to just look for someone who will.”

“The Governor's signing into law a ban on feline declawing marks yet another achievement for animal protection this session. Declawing of cats does not improve the human-animal bond and often results in serious medical and behavioral problems. Banning this cruel practice, which is in essence amputation, will prevent cats in Massachusetts from needless pain and suffering. We are thankful to the Governor for her signature, bill sponsor Senator Mark Montigny for his tireless leadership on this bill and commitment to making Massachusetts a better place for animals, as well as Senate President Karen Spilka, Speaker Ronald Mariano, Senate Ways and Means Chair Michael Rodrigues, House Ways and Means Chair Aaron Michlewitz, and Chairs of Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Representative Tackey Chan and Senator John Cronin,” said **Ally Blanck of the Animal Rescue League of Boston (ARL)**.

Kara Holmquist, Director of Advocacy for the MSPCA-Angell, said, “We thank the legislature and Governor for their commitment to animal protection. Our animal hospitals—Angell Animal Medical Center, Angell West, and Angell at Essex—have not performed declawing surgery for decades because it is not in the interest of the animal, often involves painful complications, and can create lifelong behavior problems. We are grateful that this unnecessary amputation is one step closer to being prohibited in the state.”

In addition to the ban on cat declawing, the following were also signed into law in 2024:

- “Ollie's Law,” which requires reasonable rules and regulations for dog daycares and boarding kennels.
- A law to prohibit the use of elephants, big cats, primates, bears, and giraffes in traveling shows in Massachusetts that took effect on January 1.
- As of January 7, a dog's breed can no longer be a factor to determine whether a family can adopt or foster children. This bill also removed restrictive language that hindered employees and contractors of human services agencies from reporting suspected animal cruelty.
- S. 2908, a bill with provisions that ban the sale of animals under eight weeks and prevent the roadside/outdoor sale of animals was also signed into law on January 8.

The declawing law takes effect on April 8. Violation of the law is a fine and can also include disciplinary action by the veterinary board.

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ABOUT THE ANIMAL RESCUE LEAGUE OF BOSTON:

Pets are family. This belief is at the heart of everything we do at the Animal Rescue League of Boston. ARL is the first female-founded animal welfare organization in Massachusetts and is proud to carry on a legacy of kindness and compassion, helping more than 20,000 animals annually since 1899. Recognized for innovative, award-winning programs that go beyond sheltering, ARL addresses the root causes of the issues facing animals and the people who love them. By partnering with communities, ARL helps animals heal and thrive, keeps pets and people together, and protects animals from harm. Because there is no government funding for this important work, animals must rely on people like you to get the care they need, when they need it most, 365 days a year. For more information, visit arlboston.org and follow ARL on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#).

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