

PAW PROJECT

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organization

The Paw Project quarterly



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"I am so pleased to see San Francisco moving toward a ban on this barbaric practice. These commissioners should be commended for their courage and groundbreaking progress on this issue. I urge the Board of Supervisors to adopt an ordinance as soon as possible to spare cats in San Francisco any further suffering."

Paul Koretz,
California Assemblyman

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SF Supervisors Condemn Declawing

The San Francisco County Board of Supervisors unanimously adopted a resolution on September 23 condemning the declawing of cats. The resolution does not ban veterinarians from declawing, but urges them to discontinue the procedure. Supervisor Gerardo Sandoval, who sponsored the resolution, said he may soon propose an ordinance that would outlaw declawing in San Francisco. One other North American city, West Hollywood, CA banned the procedure last April. Sandoval's resolution came twelve days after the San Francisco Commission of Animal Control and Welfare voted unanimously to recommend that the San Francisco Board of Supervisors ban declawing and support the Koretz Anti-Declawing Bill, AB 395. The move to ban declawing in San Francisco has been led by Commissioner Susan Wheeler. Paw Project Director, Jennifer Conrad, DVM, was a featured



Paw Project spokescat, Bowie, gives San Francisco a high five. See more photos at Christina O'Brien's website, IgglyAndBowie.com.

speaker at the Commission's meeting. She presented video and photos of declawing surgery and its complications. Others supporting the ban included Pam Runquist of the Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights (AVAR), Dr. Elliot Katz of In Defense of Animals (IDA), Jill Kiesow of Animal Protection

Institute (API), and representatives from Fund for Animals. SF vet Dean Beyerinck from Irving Street Veterinary Hospital strongly supported a ban and told the Commission that his clinic had a long-standing policy of not performing declawing or any other non-therapeutic pro-

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Koretz to Amend California Anti-Declaw Bill

California Assemblyman Paul Koretz proposed a statewide declaw ban in the 2003 legislative session, but the bill, AB 395, stalled in committee. Koretz plans to "tweak the language" of the bill and reintroduce it in January 2004. "It will take local leadership to build up the support," he said. "We have to get across to the Legislature that (declawing) isn't a benign procedure."

Koretz has made it a priority to introduce pro-animal legislation every year since 2001 when he was first elected. This year, Koretz authored three bills on behalf of animals. He introduced a bill which would ban the barbaric practice of using packs of dogs to hunt bears and another which would forbid the practice selling homeless dogs and cats from shelters for biomedical research. Unfortunately, all

three bills were put on hold for the year in face of vehement opposition, especially from the CVMA. Koretz hopes amendments might ease some of the concerns of unsure legislators. "Animal legislation will always be challenging to work on, but that will never deter me," says Koretz. "If we ignore the pain and suffering of animals, then we do a disservice to our own humanity."

Your Donations Help Declawed Tigers and Lion



Czar, a three-year-old tiger declawed as a cub by an Oregon vet, was suffering. Below: infected, abnormal nail growing out of the top of his paw, before reparative surgery in July



From unfortunate beginnings, confined in cramped, dark cages, Czar and Blue now have hope for brighter future. Rescued by Forever Wild Exotic Animal Sanctuary in Phelan, California, the big cats each have had reconstructive paw surgery made possible by generous contributions to the Paw Project.

The three-year-old tiger brothers were declawed as cubs for the owners of a small traveling circus. Their cages were no larger than broom closets. Their plight persuaded Forever Wild's founders, Joel and Chemaime Almqvist, to adopt the suffering cats. Noticing the tigers were limping, Joel sought help from the Paw Project.

With funds raised by the appeal in the previous issue of The Paw Project Quarterly, Czar had his first surgery in July. Blue's surgery followed in October. The animals were so disfigured by the original declawing, that they will require multiple surgeries to repair the extensive damage. "I have never seen nail regrowth and infection this bad," said Paw

Project veterinary surgeon, Kirk Wendelburg, DVM.

The Paw Project is committed to helping these animals—as are the Almqvists. The brothers will undergo further reparative surgery in early 2004. The two tigers are already happier. "I didn't know they could jump and play like that!" said Joel. If he was unsure of the crippling effects of declawing before, Joel has no doubts now. "I'm a believer," he said.

An African lion named Louis underwent reconstructive paw repair surgery in November. He had been declawed two years ago, and his keepers at a southern California sanctuary observed that his feet had multiple draining infections. Louis proved to be suffering from osteomyelitis, a serious bone infection, in several of his toes. Because of the limitations of anesthesia time and the extent of the damage, only one paw could be repaired.

Louis is scheduled for another repair surgery in March 2004. Contributions are used for supplies and hospital costs. Veterinary care is donated.

The California Veterinary
Medical Association's
Executive Director

Dick Schumacher, DVM
said that he

"will never agree that
declawing is inhumane."

Declaw Horror Stories - From Our Readers

Dear Paw Project,

Today a sweet little red Maine Coon mix lost his life due to a massive infection throughout his body. He was less than 6 months old and all four feet had been declawed, including the dewclaws. The vet found open wounds on his paws. The infection was throughout his body (sepsis) so it was too late by the time he was brought in. I am so angry about his suffering and needless death.

This poor little cat was found near death in a ditch, so we have no way of knowing who the owner or the vet responsible is. — BVH via e-mail

Dear Paw Project,

I had my male cat "Oliver" fixed and the front paw declawed this Tuesday morning. I was supposed to pick him up on Wednesday but they called and wanted to keep him another day because he was still bleeding. Early this morning I received a message from the vet saying that I needed to call her right away because they still could not stop the bleeding in one of his paws.

Today we rushed him up to another animal hospital at the vet's recommendation. I asked if he had a better chance to live and she immediately said yes. Anyway, by the time you read this, Oliver will probably no longer be with us. They still cannot control the bleeding. They re-packed his paw three times today and were re-suturing it tonight. I've never heard of a cat dying from a declaw. I just can't chalk this up to "one of those things." — BL via e-mail

(Oliver did not survive.)



Animal Lovers Mourn Loss of Buddy Hackett

The animals lost one of their dearest friends with the passing of Buddy Hackett on June 30. He was 78. For more than 50 years he was a top act in nightclubs, in Broadway shows, on television and in movies, including *The Music Man*, *The Love Bug*, and *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*.

In recent years, Buddy dedicated more and more of his time to animal causes. He used his brilliant comedic presence to speak for abandoned and homeless dogs and cats.

Buddy and Sherry, his wife of nearly 50 years, founded Singita Animal Sanctuary in 1998. Singita is the first new no-kill, cage-free animal sanctuary to

be built in Los Angeles County in over thirty years. Its goals are to provide shelter and medical care to thousands of animals in need.

Buddy hosted Singita's Annual Night of Comedy to raise money for the animals. On May 27, Buddy testified humorously, but persuasively against declawing before the Malibu City Council. He charmed the councilmembers who unanimously passed a resolution condemning declawing. Buddy is survived by Sherry and his children, Sandy, Lisa, and Ivy...and millions of fans. Although Buddy will be sorely missed, his loving heart will have a lasting legacy in the purrs and



Buddy Hackett (center) with Dom DeLuise and Jennifer Conrad at Singita benefit in May 2003.

wagging tails of rescued cats and dogs.

Read more about Singita at their website, www.singita.org.

"Morality cannot be legislated, but behavior can be regulated.

Laws may not change the heart, but they can restrain the heartless."

Martin Luther King, Jr.

San Francisco Board of Supervisors Opposes Declawing

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cedure such as tail-docking or ear-cropping. Also supporting a declaw ban were several local animal behaviorists who testified that declawed cats in their shelters were disproportionately unadoptable due to behavior problems.

Dr. Tom Mack, owner of Bayshore Animal Hospital in nearby San Mateo, was the lone voice of dissent at the Commission meeting. Dr. Mack

represented the 4900 members of the California Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA). While defending a vet's right to declaw, he expressed "shock" at Dr. Conrad's presentation. He said that the complications she showed constituted "malpractice" and would justify prosecution "to the fullest extent of the law." He also said that declawing cats without a pre-operative consultation with a veterinarian and an informed

consent was below the standard of care.

Responding to questioning from Commissioner Wheeler, Dr. Mack said he could foresee a time when the CVMA would officially oppose non-therapeutic declawing. Supporters of a declaw ban in San Francisco should write to the Supervisors. Their addresses can be found at http://www.ci.sf.ca.us/site/bdsupvrs_index.asp.

Paw Project Receives Award from Makers of Sticky Paws

In June the Paw Project received a generous \$500 donation from Fe-Lines, Inc., the maker of Sticky Paws, through the company's Buddy Fund program. The contribution will be used for The Paw Project's educational programs. According to company spokesman, Chris Ruben, Sticky Paws for Furniture and the new, larger sized Sticky Paw XL are specially formulated transparent adhesive strips that apply directly to fabric to deter cats from scratching and damaging furniture. "They are harmless to cats and

furniture and control scratching behavior humanely," Ruben says. The company's slogan is "Don't Declaw...Get Sticky Paws!" Over a half-million Sticky Paws have been sold worldwide. The Buddy Fund was named in honor of Buddy, the kitty companion of Fe-lines' CEO Bonnie Pemberton. Buddy was the inspiration for Sticky Paws for Furniture and is pictured on the front of each package of Sticky Paws. Since 1999, the Buddy Fund has donated over \$37,000 to a variety of humane causes.



Angela Ruben, Director of Marketing (left), Paw Project Director Jennifer Conrad and Chris Ruben

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The Paw Project operates under the auspices of Singita Animal Sanctuary.

Founded by Sherry and Buddy Hackett, Singita works hard to help stray and abandoned animals.

For more about Singita please see: www.singita.org.



The Paw Project's mission is to promote the humane and ethical treatment of animals, to educate the public about the painful and crippling effects of feline declawing, to end the practice of declaw surgery, and to rehabilitate big cats that have been declawed.

The Paw Project is supported by private donations and the sale of LaLa Cards (www.lalacards.com), animal-themed greeting cards. The tax-deductible contributions are used to pay for surgical facilities and supplies, educational programs, and anti-declawing efforts.

Paw Project is Guest at Animal Law Conference

Dr. Jennifer Conrad was a guest speaker at the 11th Annual Animal Law Conference October 25 and 26 at Lewis & Clark Law School in Portland, Oregon. The theme of the conference was *Building Animal Friendly Communities through Legislation, Community Action, and Legal Advocacy*.

The over 200 conference attendees included animal advocates from numerous humane

organizations, rescuers and shelter workers, veterinary professionals, and animal-rights attorneys from across the United States and abroad.

Dr. Conrad spoke on building effective coalitions to help animals in the community.

She described the steps the Paw Project took to organize veterinarians, humane groups and lawyers to draft legislation for the city of West Holly-

wood. The ordinance that was eventually passed by the city council became the first law in North America banning declawing.

Laura Ireland Moore, Director of the National Center for Animal Law, had heard of the Paw Project through news reports, and said she was encouraged to see veterinarians take an active role in promoting legal protection for animals.

Declawing is Bad Advice, Physicians Say

Despite lack of support by the medical community, there are a few who still accept the faulty notion that declawing can be justified by supposed medical benefits for humans, particularly for immunocompromised persons, such as those with AIDS or diabetes.

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) alleges that "declawing of domestic cats should be considered...when their clawing presents (an infection) risk for its owners." However, this advice is not endorsed by physicians. The risk of developing an opportunistic disease from cat scratches is exceedingly low. In his book, *The Guide to Living with HIV Infection*, John G. Bartlett, MD, Professor of Medicine and Infectious Diseases at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, writes that immunocompromised, HIV-

positive persons "need not declaw the cat." Dr. Bartlett is a consultant to the National Institutes of Health and is an editor for the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

The ASPCA finds that "because their first line of defense has been taken away, declawed cats may resort to biting more often" than non-declawed cats. That is a concern of Ralph Hansen, MD, whose Pacific Oaks Medical Group in Beverly Hills, CA treats over 2500 HIV-positive individuals.

Dr. Hansen says, "The risk of diseases being transmitted from cats comes primarily from their teeth and the litter box. The claws are far, far down the list. There is no rational medical reason for a physician to recommend declawing a cat."

"I rely on veterinarians to give me advice about animals, not about treatment of human

diseases," agrees Palm Springs physician, Paul Marut, MD. "I don't know why a vet would want to dispense medical advice for humans. In my opinion, that's practicing medicine without a license."

Not all veterinarians extol the spurious health benefits of declawing. Michael G. Groves, DVM, MPH, PhD, Professor at LSU School of Veterinary Medicine, writes, "Too often what is missing is some reasonable approximation of the true risk of disease transmission balanced against the benefits of pet ownership."

Dr. Groves continues, "HIV-positive individuals and AIDS patients should be able to have cats.... The benefits of a companion animal for some people may outweigh any risks of pet ownership, provided steps are taken to keep the risk at a minimum."