

## PAW PROJECT

A 501(c)(3)  
nonprofit  
organization

# The Paw Project Quarterly



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Spring 2003

### Upcoming Event:

A Paw Project fundraising event will be held on Saturday, May 31 from 11 AM to 3 PM at:

Santa Monica Wild Oats Natural Marketplace  
1425 Montana Ave.  
(between 14th and 15th Sts.)  
Santa Monica, CA

Proceeds from the sale of lunch (generously donated by Wild Oats) will go to The Paw Project

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## Declaw Ban Passes in West Hollywood, CA

West Hollywood, California has become the first city in North America to prohibit declawing. On April 7, the City Council unanimously approved an anti-declaw measure sponsored by The Paw Project. The new ordinance had been introduced by Councilmember John Duran and applies to cats and all other animals.

West Hollywood, a city of 36,000, is bordered by Los Angeles and Beverly Hills. The City Council had already passed a resolution condemning declawing in January.

"We would encourage our neighboring cities to follow our lead," said Councilmember Duran.

Although cat declawing is illegal or considered unethical in most industrialized nations, it is a common practice in the United States and Canada.

"This victory is important not only for the animals of West Hollywood but because it sets a precedent for other communities

that are interested in enacting similar animal protection laws," said Jennifer Conrad, DVM, director of The Paw Project.

At the City Council meeting, only one person, Dr. Peter Weinstein of the California Veterinary Medical Association, spoke against the ban. He claimed that the decision to perform declawing should be between the veterinarian and client and was not a matter to be legislated. Councilmembers Duran, Jeff Prang and John Heilman took exception to Weinstein's opinion and stated that it was within the purview of government to pass laws against animal cruelty. No representative from any of the city's three veterinary clinics spoke against the ordinance. A veterinarian from one of the clinics has subsequently appeared on local television to voice his support for the new law.

Declawing, also known as onychectomy, is an amputation at the first joint of each toe in a cat's paw. It's normally done to keep



cats from scratching furniture and people. Many reports suggest declawed cats are more apt to bite, and physicians agree that a cat's bite creates a far worse wound than a scratch. Alternatives to declawing include regular nail trimming and the use of vinyl nail caps, deterrent sticky tape, and scratching posts.

## California Anti-Declaw Bill to be Revisited in 2004

The California Anti-Declaw bill, AB 395, was presented to the California State Assembly Business and Professions Committee on April 29, 2003. The bill, which would enact a statewide ban on cat declawing, did not get the necessary votes to continue its movement through the legislature this year. It will be reconsidered in the 2004 session. Speaking on behalf of AB 395

were the author of the bill, Assemblymember Paul Koretz (D-42nd District), and Dr. Jennifer Conrad, Director of The Paw Project. Two Sacramento-area veterinarians, Dr. Laurie Siperstein-Cook and Dr. Barbara Hodges, as well as Teri Barnato, the National Director of the Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights (AVAR) also testified in favor of the bill. Mr. Ko-

retz, who sits on the Business and Professions Committee, eloquently explained the need for this bill and addressed many of the misconceptions about declawing.

The supporters of AB 395 pointed out the declawing is an amputation of the last bone of each toe. Declawing may cause medical and behavioral complica-

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Jay is a declawed bobcat whose crippled feet were repaired by Paw Project vets. Jay lives at the ECO Station. ([www.ecostation.org](http://www.ecostation.org))

## Paw Project Vets Help Crippled Bobcat

Jay is jumping for joy. The declawed three-year-old bobcat's feet were repaired by Paw Project veterinarians Jennifer Conrad and Kirk Wendelburg on April 8.

Jay was confiscated as an illegal pet by the California Department of Fish and Game and brought to STAR ECO Station only a few months ago. Jay had been declawed as a cub. Although he was very happy in his new home, the pain from his toe amputations became apparent to the ECO Station crew who watched as Jay walked gingerly

on his sore toes. The ECO Station is a Culver City, CA wildlife rescue center and teaching facility which provides environmental education to students, pre-school through college.

Katiana Bozzi, Educational Outreach Director of the ECO Station, accompanied Jay for his paw repair surgery.

Jay's paws were a classic example of pad atrophy and displacement, a common result of declawing. The bobcat was the 22nd animal treated by the Paw Project. His surgery required removing bone fragments from each of his front

toes and repositioning the tendons and pads. Jay's back feet were not declawed. The difference between the atrophied and deformed pads of the front feet and the normal pads of the back feet, was profound.

The entire surgery was captured by the cameras for Animal Planet's new show, "Adoption Tales." The program that will air in August.

Jay is home now, and has recovered nicely. "He is bounding around and playing comfortably," said Bozzi. "I am so happy he's no longer in pain."

## California Anti-Declaw Bill

*(Continued from page 1)*

tions. Biting and litter box avoidance, frequently reported to be the result of declawing, are common reasons for the relinquishments of cats to animal shelters. Nationally, over 70% of shelter cats are euthanized. The bill's supporters accurately explained that there was no medically sound reason to declaw a cat for the benefit of human health.

Testifying in opposition to AB 395 were the lobbyist hired by the California Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA); Dr. Ken Schenck, a veterinarian in private practice in Sacramento; Dr. Leslie Cooper, a veterinary behaviorist; and Joan Miller, a representative from the Cat Fanciers' Association (CFA).

Most of the five minutes of testimony allotted to the opposition was used by Dr. Schenck, who described declawing as benign and painless procedure. He said he only performed declaw surgery five times a year.

If Dr. Schenck meant to imply that his was a typical veterinary practice, he was incorrect. National estimates indicate that 20-

25% of house cats are declawed. An article in the Contra Costa Times on March 6, 2003 quoted an Antioch, CA veterinarian, Dr. Howard Schutzman, who said he performed five declaw surgeries in a single day. A survey by the Pet Press indicated that 75% of the Los Angeles veterinarians polled were willing to perform declaw surgery on demand without determining medical or behavioral indications for the procedure. This is more likely representative of the way declawing is performed in California.

Dr. Cooper said that there was no scientific evidence that declawing was associated with behavior problems. Another board certified animal behaviorist, Dr. Nicholas Dodman, Professor at Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine, has a different opinion. He says, "None of the studies to date on declawing has addressed the right questions to the right persons, nor drawn the right conclusions. It is hard to see why veterinarians don't spend more time and effort recommending alternatives to declawing, a painful and sometimes debilitating procedure. Instead,

(veterinarians) seem to keep finding ways of justifying declawing as an essential component of feline practice."

The testimony of Joan Miller of the CFA seemed particularly disingenuous. In their publications, the CFA states, "Because of post operative discomfort or pain, and potential future behavioral or physical effects, CFA disapproves of declawing or tendonectomy surgery". Despite its disagreement with the CVMA (which denies a link between declawing and behavioral problems), the CFA vigorously opposes any legislation that would give animals rights or would view them as anything other than private property. Breeders groups, such as the CFA, are threatened by any laws that restrict the number of animals in a household, mandate spaying and neutering, or otherwise limit the ability for a human to do what they please with an animal.

Mr. Koretz rebutted the assertions of the bill's opponents and asked his fellow committee members for feedback for possible amendments to the bill, since

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**Dr. Nicholas Dodman,  
Veterinary Behaviorist  
at Tufts University**



Impy takes a cat nap

## Paw Project Profiles – John Duran and Hernan Molina

West Hollywood Councilmember John J. Duran is a civil rights attorney with years of experience representing the voiceless and the disenfranchised. His Deputy, Hernan Molina, has been in public service for over a decade, serving on a number of Los Angeles commissions, such as AIDS Project Los Angeles. But until the summer of 2002, the clients they represented were of the two-legged variety. In July, Jean Mathison, a West Hollywood resident and animal advocate, received a call from Molina, telling her of a cat who was found wandering the streets

in West Hollywood. The little tuxedo cat had been abandoned. Mathison and Molina eventually caught the cat, whom they found had been declawed. Over the years, Mathison had seen many declawed cats abandoned or in shelters. She knew of The Paw Project and the rehabilitation work performed by its director, Dr. Jennifer Conrad. She arranged for Conrad to meet with Molina and Duran to discuss the problem.

"I didn't know declawing was the equivalent of removing everything from the bottom knuckle,

*(Continued on page 4)*



Councilmember John Duran (left) and his Deputy, Hernan Molina

### California Anti-Declaw Bill

*(Continued from page 2)*

it appeared that there were not the seven votes for its passage through committee. Assemblyman Abel Maldonado (R-Santa Maria) dismissively responded to Mr. Koretz request. He referred to the state's budget crisis, implying that the legislators' need to deal with that issue precluded any action that would show compassion towards animals. Mr. Koretz suggested amending the bill so it would apply only to exotic and wild cats that are

kept in captivity. This was opposed by the CVMA lobbyist and with a perverse glee by CFA's Joan Miller. Ms. Miller did not explain why the Cat Fanciers' Association would oppose the declawing of tigers, lions, cougars, and leopards.

Chairman Correa ruled against any amendments and called for a vote. The final vote was 6-5-2 against the bill. Assemblymembers Koretz, Mark Leno (D-San Francisco), Leland Yee (D-San Francisco), Rudy Bermudez (D-

Norwalk) and Joe Nation (D-San Rafael) voted in favor of the bill. Assemblymembers Ellen Corbett (D-San Leandro) and Juan Vargas (D-Chula Vista) abstained. Their votes would have allowed the bill to pass through committee. AB 395 now becomes a "two-year bill" and will be reconsidered in the 2004 session.

The Paw Project is grateful to the hundreds of people who sent letters in favor of the bill and hopes they will continue their support next year.

### Huh?

**On his website, Assemblyman Abel Maldonado, a vocal critic of AB 395 says, "I strive to fight for the voiceless and the vulnerable"**

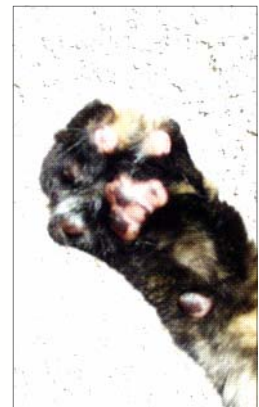
### Letters to The Paw Project

*The Paw Project receives many letters and e-mails. Here is one:*

Dear Paw Project,  
I too abhor declawing cats. I have four pet cats in my home and yes, over the years, their claws have done a minute amount of damage. I tell people that cats are cats, if you don't like their natural behavior, choose another pet. When I was 17 years old, the tip of my index finger on my right hand was mangled in a horse accident. Since the damage was

so extensive, and my nail would never grow back properly, all concerned decided it was best to just remove the finger at the third joint. Just like the procedure that a cat has to endure 10 or more times over. To explain to people who are thinking about declawing, I simply hold up my right hand and tell them exactly what is done. Seventeen years later my fingertip still hurts. As a matter of fact, my fingertip is hurting now just thinking about it.

I watched the video on your website of the cougar walking down the ramp (I cried at his pain), I couldn't help notice how splayed and floppy his feet were. Am I correct in assuming that this is a lack of muscle tone due to lack of exercise? I see my own cats stretch and work their way into a carpeted scratching post with their claws. A declawed cat can't do that and along with the pain associated with the surgery and afterwards I can see how the muscles would just wither away.  
S. B.



Deformed pads and toes of a declawed domestic cat

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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](http://www.lalacards.com)), animal-themed greeting cards. Tax-deductible contributions are used to pay for surgical facilities and supplies, educational programs, and anti-declawing efforts.**

## Profile – John Duran and Hernan Molina

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meaning muscle, tendon and bone were ripped out when the claw was taken out. I was horrified," said Duran. In December of 2002, Council-member Duran proposed a local ban on the practice of declawing. Overseeing the drafting of the ordinance was the job of Molina, who said, "We have a relationship of respect with animals and a responsibility that they not be subjected to techniques that

create harm. Declawing is an amputation, there's no other way around it." In April, the ordinance was ratified by a unanimous vote. On May 8th, 2003, West Hollywood became the first city in all of North America to outlaw declawing. Mr. Duran, who has had several cats, was elected to the West Hollywood City Council in 2001. His election was the continuation of a long and dedicated his-

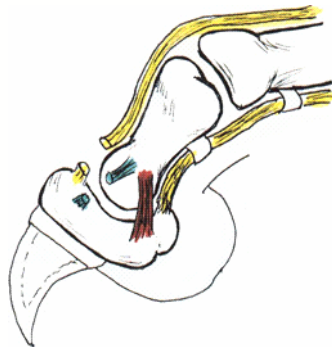
tory of service to the West Hollywood community. Since 1996, Mr. Duran has served as a volunteer attorney for the Coalition for Economic Survival Legal Clinic, and has been the recipient of the Labor Day L.A. Humanitarian Award. Mr. Molina was program auditor for the LA County Office of AIDS Programs prior to working with Mr. Duran in West Hollywood. He is the proud guardian of Bubú, the cat.

## The Myth of Laser Declaw Surgery

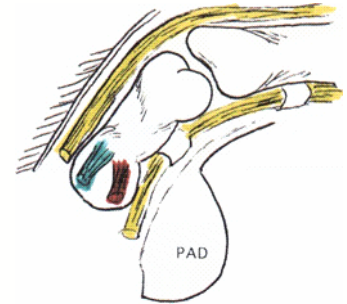
Lasers cut through flesh by means of a highly amplified beam of light. They are useful tools for many surgical applications such as the removal of large superficial lesions or tumors difficult to access with a scalpel. Proponents of lasers claim that there is less bleeding and less pain when compared to other surgical tech-

niques, alleging that the laser makes declawing more humane. The fact is that there is **no** difference whether declawing is performed with a laser or with a scalpel. A study reported in the September 1, 2002 issue of the *Journal of the American Veterinary Association* by Dr. Michael Mison and a team of researchers from Michigan State University, found that lasers offered no benefit over the more conventional methods of declawing. Their article stated "differences in discomfort and complications between groups treated via scalpel versus CO<sub>2</sub> laser were not clinically relevant." Whatever minor benefits a laser might have, the result of declawing by either method is the same. It is an amputation. The last bone of the toe, the third phalanx, is removed. The risks of general

anesthesia and other inherent surgical complications are the same in either case. There have been no studies that show that the incidence of infection is less for laser declawing. And it is expensive. A \$15,000 to \$50,000 veterinary laser will certainly increase the cost of declaw surgery significantly.



**At the start of laser declaw surgery, the tendons are cut**



**When laser declaw surgery is complete, the entire last toe bone is removed**