

# DESTRUCTIVE SCRATCHING



Cats like to scratch. They scratch during play. They scratch while stretching. They scratch to mark territory or as a threatening signal to other cats. Cat's claws need regular sharpening, cats scratch on things to remove frayed, worn outer claw and expose new sharper claws. All this scratching can cause a lot of damage to furniture and carpeting.

## WHAT TO DO ABOUT YOUR CAT'S SCRATCHING HABITS

The best tactic when dealing with scratching is not to try to stop your cat from scratching, but instead to teach her where and what to scratch. An excellent approach is to provide her with appropriate, cat-attractive surfaces and objects to scratch, such as scratching posts. The following steps will help you encourage your cat to scratch where you want her to:

- Provide a variety of scratching posts with different qualities and surfaces. Try giving your cat posts made of cardboard, carpeting, wood and upholstery. Some cats prefer horizontal posts, other like vertical or slanted. Some like a vertical for raking and others like to horizontal grain for picking. Once you figure out your cat's preference for scratching, provide additional posts of that kind in various locations. Keep in mind that all cats want a sturdy post that won't shift or collapse when used. Most cats like a post that is tall enough that they can stretch fully.
- Encourage your cat to investigate her posts by scenting them with catnip, hanging toys on them and placing them in areas where she will be inclined to climb on them.
- Discourage inappropriate scratching by removing or covering other desirable objects. Put plastic double-sided sticky tape on furniture. Place scratching posts next to these objects as legal alternatives. There is also a cat scratch deterrent spray that can be sprayed on the object to keep the cats away.
- Clip your cat's nails regularly. Consider putting plastic claw caps on the cat's claws so that he won't do any damage when scratching something. These special caps attach to claws with an adhesive, they are temporary, lasting four to six weeks.
- If you catch your cat in the act of scratching an inappropriate object, you can try startling him by clapping your hands. Use this procedure only as a last resort, because your cat may associate you with the startling event and learn to fear you.