

# All About Pets

*The national pet care information service*



## SCRATCHING AND CLAWING INDOORS



THE BLUE CROSS

*Britain's pet charity*

*Sometimes cats may tear chair arms with their claws, scratch patches of wallpaper off the wall or shred stair carpets. Scratching has several functions, one of the most important being to keep a cat's hunting weapons sharp. Scratching also leaves scent marks in a territory.*





## **Why do cats scratch inside the home as well as outdoors?**

Cats usually scratch outside, choosing trees or posts – wood is just the right texture to allow claws to dig in and be drawn down, pulling off the old claw sheath to reveal the sharp point of the new one. Indoor cats with limited outdoor access will still need to perform this natural behaviour. If nothing suitable is provided, they will find something in the house that has an appropriate surface! Some cats will scratch more when in the presence of other cats. Just what they are trying to convey is not well understood, but this type of scratching may be done as a display and to leave a scent mark to communicate with other cats in the vicinity.

## What can I do to prevent it?

Don't blame the cat. Your cat is not doing this out of spite or in an attempt to cause destruction on purpose. Provide a scratching post – it is important to provide an outlet for claw sharpening if your cat is an indoor cat or has got into the habit of sharpening its claws inside the house. Place the post in the front of the damaged area. Gently wipe your cats' paws down the post to leave some scent on it and show it what to do. Do this several times when the post is new. If you catch your cat in the act of scratching elsewhere, carry it to the post and encourage it to scratch there instead.

If curiosity or the satisfaction of clawing soft furnishings is encouraging your cat to use that area, you will need to give it another outlet for its energies through exercise. Try playing with your cat little and often throughout the day or providing toys which offer an outlet for its hunting abilities. If your cat attacks the wallpaper, you can try changing the type of paper you use (cats seem to prefer paper which has a raised texture) or painting the area instead. Don't encourage the cat by giving it attention when it is scratching.





## What else can I do?

Where scratching occurs at many sites it can be a form of marking behaviour and a sign that the cat may be feeling insecure. In this case, the solution to the problem may depend on identifying the cause of the stress or insecurity.

- Look carefully at the relationships between cats – providing some resting places high up to let the cat relax while still being able to watch what is going on will improve security
- Restrict your cat's access within the house and concentrate on making it feel secure in one or two rooms
- Never punish the cat. This will make it feel even more insecure. You should be viewed as a source of security by your cat, rather than as an additional threat.
- Close the cat flap and let the cat in and out yourself, or fit a selective type with magnetic fasteners to keep strange cats out

Remember – nervous cats are likely to find any new challenge threatening.

## Further information

For further information and advice on caring for your pet or horse visit [www.allaboutpets.org.uk](http://www.allaboutpets.org.uk), the national pet care information service. Alternatively, you can write to us at the address below to request a list of available leaflets.

All About Pets is provided by The Blue Cross, Britain's pet charity. We rely entirely on your support to enable us to continue our vital work. Any contribution would be most welcome. Thank you.



THE BLUE CROSS

*Britain's pet charity*

All About Pets, The Blue Cross  
FREEPOST NAT4336, BURFORD OX18 4BR  
[www.allaboutpets.org.uk](http://www.allaboutpets.org.uk)

Registered charity no: 224392