



**Date:** May 26, 2015

**To:** Senate Committee on Human Services and Early Childhood  
Senator Sara Gelser, Chair  
Senator Alan Olsen, Vice-Chair

**From:** Sharon Harmon  
Executive Director, Oregon Humane Society

**Re:** House Bill 3494A

Established in 1868, the Oregon Humane Society is the state's largest and oldest animal welfare organization with over 50,000 supporters statewide. We are not affiliated with any local or national organization.

**We are here today to ask for your support of HB 3494A.**

Barking is a normal behavior for dogs; they bark to communicate. Excessive barking can be minimized by proper training, stimulation, companionship, and environmental modification. Scratching is a normal behavior for cats; they scratch to mark their territory, to stretch, and to maintain the health of their claws. Destructive scratching can be prevented by providing the cat with suitable scratching surfaces, claw trimming, synthetic claw caps, and behavior modification. Declawing and debarking are surgical solutions for behavior issues.

Debarking surgery involves removing the vocal cords, in whole or in part. Declawing surgery removes not only the claws but also bones and tissue from the tips of the digits. The human equivalent would be amputation of the tips of the fingers to the first knuckle. These surgeries involve significant pain and risk and are not always effective.<sup>i</sup>

House Bill 3494A simply mirrors what the American Veterinary Medical Association states on their website, that debarking surgery "should only be performed by qualified, licensed veterinarians as a final alternative to euthanasia after behavioral modification to correct excessive vocalization has failed and after discussion of potential complications from the procedure with the owner."<sup>ii</sup> Similarly, HB 3494A borrows the language found on the AVMA website with regard to declawing cats. The AVMA states that "Declawing of domestic cats should be considered only after attempts have been made to prevent the cat from using its claws destructively or when it's clawing presents an above normal health risk for its owner(s)."<sup>iii</sup>

These surgeries are painful, unnecessary, and should not be performed for convenience. The decision to subject one's pet to this procedure should be well thought out and only as a last resort; House Bill 3494A builds those precautions into Oregon's law.

Sincerely,



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<sup>i</sup> [https://www.avma.org/KB/Resources/LiteratureReviews/Documents/declawing\\_bgnd.pdf](https://www.avma.org/KB/Resources/LiteratureReviews/Documents/declawing_bgnd.pdf)

<https://www.avma.org/KB/Resources/LiteratureReviews/Documents/Backgrounder-Canine%20Devocalization-Final.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.avma.org/KB/Policies/Pages/Canine-Devocalization.aspx>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.avma.org/KB/Policies/Pages/Declawing-of-Domestic-Cats.aspx>

See also:

<http://www.hsvma.org/assets/pdfs/devocalization-facts.pdf>

<http://www.hsvma.org/legislation#cosmeticsurgeries>