

Dear Rep. Barton,

I am re-submitting to you my earlier testimony, updated, for inclusion at the June 2nd meeting.

Updated comments.

I have watched the video of the May 26th meeting and I do understand the points you made regarding the difficulty in getting the Bill heard other than in its present form. I know sometimes things have to be achieved a small step at a time, as was the case a century ago in the U.K. in getting votes for women. However, what so shocked me that it brought me to tears, and what made me even more certain that the amendments must stand, was listening to the testimony of former veterinarian Tom Keck describe the proposed amendments as “not and innocent modification” and to continue by describing having his five cats declawed as there was “truly no other solution” to prevent “destructive behaviour to beloved antiques” (inanimate objects are “beloved” above sentient beings? Incomprehensible). This of course is utter rubbish and it is rubbish that is all the more sickening that it comes from someone involved in the veterinary profession, and is comparable to the sort of rubbish that was spouted a century ago as to why women shouldn't have the vote.

In the European Union alone there are over 500 million people, many of whom have both antiques and cats - and ALL the cats have their claws. IF and it is only IF their cats are destructive, they find a solution which doesn't involve mutilating the cat and rarely involves euthanasia. There is a general aversion to euthanizing healthy cats here.

Coincidentally, in a U.K. online paper (mailonline.co.uk) today, May 29th, there is a feature and video clip of a dog called Benny looking guilty when his owner discovers he has ripped the sofa to shreds (shown). It wasn't an antique - but so easily could have been. Would Mr. Keck advocate having dogs' teeth removed to protect "beloved" inanimate objects? Dogs can be even more destructive than cats. I have personal experience of this from recalling damage by the family dog as a child (ripping curtains and carpet) to purchasing an apartment in 2006 which had extensive damage to the woodwork and plasterwork where a bored and lonely dog had raked at it.

I noted the point made by the Senator about dewclaws. I know these are sometimes removed and that it is always for the benefit of the animal and the animal alone and has no adverse effect on them physically or emotionally, and therein lies the difference.

Original comments.

I write from the U.K. as a lifelong cat owner (I'm 62) and supporter of animal welfare groups which, since I learned of the horrific practice in the USA and Canada, of declawing cats, includes a USA group campaigning to outlaw this practice in keeping with the rest of the developed world and many countries in the developing world.

I understand you believe this procedure gives a cat a better chance of remaining in its home, and I know the counter arguments, but the fact is that as long as this procedure is an option, it will be undertaken by those too lazy or too uncaring to bother finding means to modify a cat's furniture scratching IF, and it is IF, that cat does scratch the furniture. Not all cats do and there are very few that cannot be deterred with a bit of effort and with the greater knowledge of cat (and all animal) behaviour, and animal behaviourists in the past 20-30 years, there really is no excuse for this mutilation.

I am particularly disturbed when I see that the operation is performed as a pre-emptive measure - especially in rescue shelters - even though this is contrary to the AMVA ruling that it should be performed as a last resort.

The major animal rescue organisations in the U.K. always list on their re-homing web pages, why an animal has come into their care. I have two cats from such organisations, adopted one and three years ago after extensive searching. Rarely is destructiveness in the home cited, the principal reasons, apart from being found as a stray are death or illness of the owner, marital/relationship breakdown, owner moving to property which doesn't allow pets, allergy to the cat and inappropriate toileting.

When declawing is not an option, then people develop a different mindset e.g. dogs don't get declawed or have their teeth removed (nor should they) despite the fact that they can be even more destructive in the home (and I speak from the personal experience of purchasing an apartment with woodwork and plasterwork extensively damaged by a dog raking at it in frustration) and 1000 citizens a day in the USA receive hospital treatment for dog bites.

The continuance of the practice of declawing cats for convenience in the USA and Canada shames both countries when the it is either banned - even carrying a prison sentence in some countries e.g. Israel - or simply not practiced in the rest of the world.

Yours sincerely,

Shirley J. Swaine,

P.S. Give Clarence a stroke from the U.K.!