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## **Dewclaw Removal Policy**

Routine dewclaw removal has begun to fall out of favor among the veterinary community for several reasons. The AKC condones dewclaw removal in certain breeds, leading individuals to believe that dewclaws should be removed not only for aesthetic reasons but to prevent potential future injuries.

While front dewclaws are analogous to a human's thumb, attached rear dewclaws can be seen as the large toe. Typically dogs have front dewclaws firmly attached, if rear dewclaws are present they may be either firmly attached by bone and tendon or loosely attached by only skin, making them much more mobile.

All firmly attached dewclaws are fundamental to appropriate confirmation of the foot. Several studies have shown that dewclaws have some level of function most likely to help stabilize the "wrist" or "ankle". In addition, attached dewclaws assist dogs with tight turns and may prevent arthritis in the joints as they age, in making tight turns, and climbing and/or rough terrain.

Generally, floppy rear dewclaws are considered vestigial and do not serve a functional purpose. However, does this mean we should remove them for aesthetic reasons or to prevent an injury that likely will never occur?

Dewclaw removal is an amputation and can result in poor confirmation of the foot causing arthritis and may develop complications such as infection, wound breakdown, mineralized cysts, and regrowth of the nail under the skin.

Post-surgical care involves pain management and a concerted effort from the caretaker to prevent complications by keeping the wound dry, preventing excessive activity, licking, etc. In our experience, many post-operative return visits consist of additional anesthesia, surgery, antibiotics, bandaging and pain management.

We believe the only reason to remove a dewclaw is to treat abnormal diseases such as cancer or in the rare incidence a dewclaw is severely injured beyond repair. Amputation without medical necessity can be a painful, unnecessary procedure which causes issues that last a lifetime.

At Encompass Animal Care and Health, we will continue to exercise our right NOT to participate in prophylactic dewclaw amputation. Regarding prophylactic dewclaw removal, the answer will always be "No" regardless of recommendations from other veterinarians, breeders, groomers, etc.