

## Too Many Toes!

### What is polydactylism?

Sometime cats are born with a malformation of one or more paws which results in extra toes! The malformation can be a spontaneous mutation or run in families, and is called polydactylism.



### Why should I be aware if my cat has extra toes?

Cats that have extra toes may experience problems with overgrown toenails because they may not be able to control the extra digits and cannot wear them down or groom them. This commonly happens when there are extra toes crowded between the “thumb” and the rest of the paw. When these toenails are allowed to grow unchecked, they can grow long enough to become embedded into the paw, causing pain with each step and often leading to infections. If FCSNP notices that your cat has extra toenails that are not being worn down, we will trim them while they are with us.



### What should I do if my cat has extra toes?

**Regular nail trims will prevent overgrown nails and keep them from causing a problem.**

If your cat doesn't like to have his/her nails trimmed, your veterinarian can explore other options with you, like soft paws or positive reinforcement training. In a very few cases, amputation of the extra toes may become necessary. Please speak to your regular veterinarian to make a plan that works for you and your cat.

### What about Unowned/Community Cats or Ferals?

In feral or free roaming cats that cannot be handled for regular nail trims, amputation of the problematic toes is, in some cases, the best way to prevent the pain and suffering an overgrown/embedded nail causes. If severely ingrown toenails are identified in an unowned/“ear tip cat”, a FCSNP veterinarian will move forward with whatever action is best for the cat at the time of surgery. This may mean amputation of unhealthy toes at the time of surgery.