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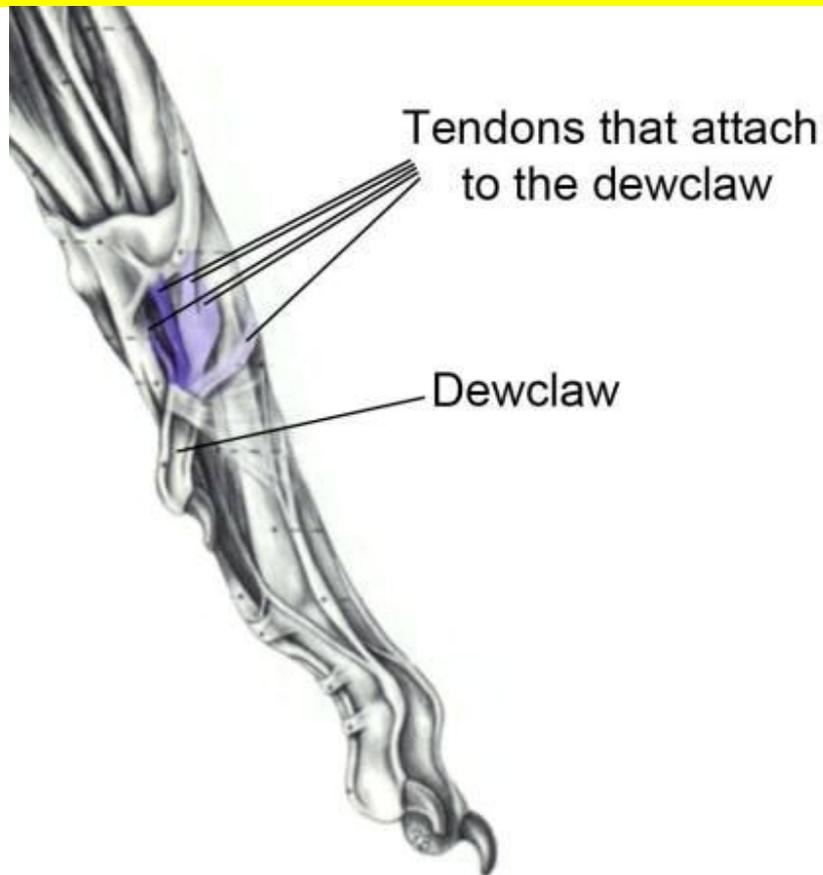
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The function of dewclaws.



Front dewclaws are typically removed by some at 3-5 days of age, because they are believed to be a non-functional digit that poses an unnecessary risk for being injured.

In standing, the front dewclaw may not appear to be functional because it doesn't come in contact with the ground.

However, observing the dewclaw when the dog is in motion tells a different story.

Five tendons attach to the dewclaw and play an important role when the dog is in motion.

For example:

When a dog's lead leg is on the ground during the gallop or canter, the dewclaw is on the ground to stabilize the carpus.

When a dog turns, the dewclaw digs into the ground to support the structures of the limb and prevent torque.

If a dog does not have dewclaws, there is a higher potential for the carpal ligaments to stretch and tear which could result in laxity and arthritis over time (OUCH!).

This can then result in more stress being generated through the dog's carpus, elbow,

shoulder, and spine as it tries to compensate for the lack of digit.

On the other hand, the rear dewclaws do not have associated tendons and are considered non-functional (though they may be required for some breed standards to be present).

In speaking with many vets, you would be surprised at how few dewclaw injuries they see.

So- given the front dewclaws' functional use, why are we so quick to remove them?

In dogs, the most common injuries seen by many rehab providers and vets occur in the shoulder complex, yet we don't see shoulders being removed.

Just a fact worth mentioning.

Here are some cool videos if you'd like to learn more about the functional use of dewclaws in dogs:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yp2xHj_NJn4

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4XflsMEk-k>