



Trap, neuter, return (TNR) is a universally recognized means of managing community cat populations. Thank you for choosing this humane and effective process to care for the cats in your colony. Please follow the instructions and rules for participation below. We include these for the safety and consideration of the cats, yourselves, and consistency in our program.

Basic Considerations

- **Do not trap more than 24 hours before the vet appointment**
- Traps cannot be left unattended, not left overnight
- Traps must be covered by a towel large enough to cover the entire trap immediately.
- Trapped cats must be kept in a warm dry place, ie; a garage, basement, barn or shed, spare bedroom, etc.
- Please make sure there is a towel covering the trap for intake
- Bring your voucher(s) with you at intake
- Cats must be kept for 24 hours in a warm dry place after discharge from surgery before being returned
- Cats can be fed a few hours after discharge

Trapping Instructions

Before You Trap

If possible, get the cats used to being fed at the same place and time of day.

Don't feed the cats the day/night before you are going to trap so the cats will be hungry. Be sure to notify others who may feed the cats not to leave food out either.

Plan to trap so that you don't have to keep the cat too long before surgery. Trapping the night before is usually the best approach. Cats should not eat 12 hours prior to surgery.

Prepare the area where you will be holding the cats before and after the surgery. A garage or other sheltered, warm, protected area is best. Lay down plastic on a solid stable surface. Cover the plastic with newspapers or pee pads to catch the inevitable stool, urine and food residue. Spraying the area ahead of time with a cat-safe flea spray (like Adams or Ovitrol) will discourage ants.

Prepare the vehicle you will use to transport them as well. Plastic may be an additional precaution. But remember that you will need to use newspapers or some other absorbent material in addition. (Urine will roll right off of the plastic, and that isn't what you want.)



Plan your day of trapping carefully. Remember that if you trap an animal and release it for some reason, it will likely be difficult to catch it again — they learn very quickly.

If there are young kittens involved, remember that they should not be weaned from the mother before 4-6 weeks of age. If you are trapping a lactating female, you may want to wait until you have located the kittens and they are old enough to wean.

Setting the Traps and Trapping

Plan to set traps just before or at the cats' normal feeding time. This is often at night. Dusk is usually the best time to set traps.

Don't trap in the rain or the heat of the day without adequate protection for the trap. Cats are vulnerable in the traps and could drown during storms or suffer from heatstroke in the sun.

Plan placement of traps on a level surface in the area where the cats usually feed or have been seen. Cats are less likely to enter the trap if it wobbles. If trapping in a public area, try to place traps where they will not be noticed by passersby (who may not understand that you are not trying to harm the cat). Bushes are often places where cats hide and provide good camouflage for the trap.

Use smelly food to bait the trap. Canned mackerel is very effective and relatively inexpensive. It is best not to put any bowls or food cans inside the trap to hold food since the animal can easily hurt itself on it in a panic or while recovering from anesthetic.

You may place some newspaper in the trap to drip juice from the bait you choose on as long as it doesn't cover the trip plate. If there is wind, the rusting paper could be a deterrent. If the cats are really hungry, lining the traps with newspaper isn't usually necessary.

Soak a small scrap of newspaper (2-3 inches by 3-4 inches) or half of a paper plate in the mackerel juice, spoon a small amount of food onto the soaked newspaper scrap or paper plate and place the food as far back in the trap as possible while taking care that the bait is not accessible from outside the trap. Making the food a little hard to reach will ensure the cat gets to the back of the trap and trips the trapping mechanism. This will also reduce injury to the cat when the door closes. Some cats are very good at getting in and out of traps without getting caught. We don't want to make it too easy for them to get away with that trick.



After placing the bait, set the trap using the instructions you received when you picked up the trap.

All traps are different. If you are not using a Humane Solution trap, please check with the manufacturer of your trap for proper operating instructions. There is a small hook attached to the right side of the trap top. It hooks onto a tiny metal cylinder on the right side of the door. The hook holds the door in an open position which also raises the trip plate. When the cat steps on the plate it will cause the hook to release the door and close the trap.

After setting the trap, cover it with a large towel or piece of towel-sized material. Fold the material at the front end of the trap to expose the opening while still covering the top, sides, and back of the trap. The cover will help to camouflage the trap and serve to calm the cat after it is caught.

Never leave traps unattended in an unprotected area, but don't hang around within sight of the cat or you will scare it off. The trapped animal is vulnerable. Passersby may release the cat or steal the trap! Wait quietly in an area where you can still see the traps without disturbing the cats. Check traps every 15 minutes or so. You can often hear the traps trip and see the cloth cover droop down slightly over the opening from a distance. As soon as the intended cat is trapped, completely cover the trap and remove the trap from the area. Be sure to dispose of the food left on the ground when you pick up the trap. You don't want to litter or give out any freebies and spoil any appetites!

When you get the captured cat to a quiet area away from the other traps, lift the cover and check for signs that you have the correct animal and not a pet or previously neutered feral. A tipped ear is the universal sign of a TNR'd cat.

If you note that you have captured a lactating female check the area for kittens and remember that this female must be released 10-12 hours after surgery so she can care for and nurse her kittens. Cover the cat back up as soon as possible. Uncovered, the animal may panic and hurt itself thrashing around in the trap.

Of course, there is always the chance that you will catch some other wild animal attracted to the food or an unintended cat. Simply release the animal quietly as stated in the releasing procedures here.

Holding Procedures

After you have finished trapping, you will probably have to hold the cats overnight until you can take them to the vet for surgery.

Place cats in the prepared protected area. Don't feed them. You can place a small bowl of water in the trap by opening the trap door just a couple of inches and placing the bowl by the trap door. Try to use a bowl that won't be tipped over easily. Don't open the door too wide, or the cat may escape. (Be sure to remove the bowl by midnight before transporting the cat to the vet.) If the trapped cat is especially fractious, or you fear injury or escape, do not open the trap.



Keep cats covered and check periodically. They will probably be very quiet as long as they are covered. Don't stick fingers in the trap or allow children or pets near the traps. These are wild animals that scratch and bite. ALL ANIMAL BITES ARE SERIOUS! IF YOU ARE BITTEN SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION AND DO NOT RELEASE THE CAT. IT MUST BE QUARANTINED. CONTACT YOUR VET FOR QUARANTINE INSTRUCTIONS.

Wash and change clothes before having contact with your own pets as a precaution against spreading any contagious diseases the cats might carry.

Always get feral kittens checked out by a vet and isolate them from your pets. Some deadly diseases can incubate without symptoms.

Day of the Surgery

Bring your cats in their covered traps and the voucher(s) with you to the appointment. Upon intake, you will be given instructions on when to return to pick up the cat(s). You will receive aftercare and discharge instructions from the veterinarian at that time.

Returning the Cat(s)

After the recommended recovery time for your cat has passed, it is time to return them to their colony. Always return the cat back where it was trapped. **Do not try to relocate the cat to another area or colony.** This can lead to confusion, excess stress, and possible rejection or injury by other feral cats in that area. Cats are very territorial.

On the day of release, return to the home colony of the cat with the cat still in a covered humane trap. Set the traps on level ground near where they were trapped. Gently fold the trap cover back to expose the end of the trap. Lift the back door of the trap to let the cat out. All traps are different and yours may not have a rear door. Please check with the manufacturer of your trap for proper instructions. Most cats will run out immediately. If yours does not, be patient and step away from the trap so the cat does not feel threatened.

Here are a few links to TNR videos that may also be helpful:

<https://www.neighborhoodcats.org/how-to-tnr/trapping/trapping-the-basics>

https://youtu.be/wF_omFE7Etc

<https://resources.bestfriends.org/article/humane-cat-trapping-instructions-tnr>