



Guide to Trapping The Basics

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Before you trap

Be sure you have a place for cats to recover from anesthesia (24-48 hrs). Contact the clinic if you would like to arrange post operative care at the clinic.

IF YOU ARE BITTEN BY A CAT SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION IMMEDIATELY.

Preparation

1. Establishing a predictable feeding schedule is essential to a successful trapping effort. Avoid feeding after dark to prevent inadvertent feeding of wildlife. Feed only as much as cats will eat in 30 minutes; the cats will learn to come when it is feeding time. Trapping will be much easier and faster when cats have been conditioned to come at a particular feeding time.
2. As your planned trapping date approaches, begin to feed cats in traps that have been secured open. Use carabineer clips or cable ties to hold the trap door open. Set up the trap in the same way you will for the actual trapping (line the bottom with newspaper or cover the trap). For very skittish cats, begin by placing the food near the entrance door and move it further back each day toward the trigger plate each day. Allowing cats to move freely in and out of traps will accustom them to their presence and will make the actual trapping effort much easier.
3. The day before trapping you must withhold food for the entire day. This is the most important part of trapping. *Do not feed extra food the day before withholding.* Ensuring that the cats are hungry is critical to successful trapping.

Exceptions: Very young kittens, nursing mothers and obviously ill cats should not have food withheld. Feed these cats separately and do not allow other cats to eat. Remove the food as soon as the desired cats have eaten. Shoo others away from the food or use squirt bottles to deter them.



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Trapping

4. On the day you have scheduled to trap, set up the traps exactly as you did in Step 2. Prepare the traps with bait away from the trapping area to avoid spooking the cats with noises. After you have the traps set up and baited, begin setting them in the trapping area. Drizzle a *small* amount of the food or treats along the inside of the trap to entice the cat toward the main bait in the back of the trap. Never leave traps unattended, but stay far enough away not to spook the cats. You should stay near enough to hear the traps snap closed when they are tripped. Never set a trap and leave it for the day or leave a trap out overnight. Don't forget to count how many traps you set to be sure you don't accidentally leave any behind.
5. Once a cat has been trapped the cat may panic - they may quickly pace back and forth, vocalize and try to scratch or bite their way out. Scratched noses and bloody claws are common minor injuries and will not cause the cat problems. Slowly approach and cover the entire trap (sides, back and front) with a sheet or blanket to help calm the cat. The panic typically does not last long and covering them helps them feel more secure. Once covered, move the trapped cat to a quiet place while you continue to trap the rest of the colony.
6. It is important that if a female cat is lactating that she be brought for spay that day so she can be release that night or very early the next day. If you trapping a colony where you are unfamiliar with the cats and possible have nursing mothers you should plan your trapping for very early in the morning on days where the clinic is open for spay/neuter.
7. DO NOT LET CATS OUT OF THEIR TRAPS. Cats should be held in covered traps. Do not let them out into a room or garage; this is dangerous to you and to the cat. Always use the trap divider whenever you need to open the trap for feeding or cleaning to keep the cat from escaping. Keep traps covered during the holding period, provide fresh food and water and clean traps daily.
8. Keep written records including a description of the cat and where it was trapped. Even the small details like trapped behind a building as opposed to in the front of the building are important. There may be colonies within colonies. Photos of cats are very useful , especially in tracking larger colonies. Attaching a photo to the cat's medical record will help you follow the cat's health over time.



Preparing for Surgery

9. Fasting - Cats must have an empty stomach for surgery so you will remove all food from the trap by midnight the night before their surgery appointment. Water is okay through the night but remove it at 6 am.
Exception: Kittens under 4 months of age should not be fasted as long as adult cats. Remove food from kittens at 6 am on the morning of surgery.
10. When transporting cats, protect your vehicle upholstery by placing a tarp, plastic or towels under the traps. Never put cats in the trunk or open bed of a pickup truck. Again, keep the traps covered during transport.

Recuperation After Surgery

11. After surgery - Cats will be wobbly and off balance for the first 12 – 24 hours. As anesthesia wears off they should gradually return to normal. Be sure that they remain covered to keep them as calm as possible. KEEP CATS WARM AFTER SURGERY. Anesthesia interferes with the body's ability to maintain body temperature so cats must be kept in an area that will be between 55 and 85 degrees for 24 hours after surgery.
12. Check on the cats at least every 12 hrs. during the recuperation period. Behavior and alertness should be normal within 24 hours. Check the incision at least once daily; it should be dry and intact with only minimal redness. Call the clinic if you notice any of the following:
 - a. bleeding - more than a few drops or more than 24 hours
 - b. signs of infection – discharge or increasing redness around incision
 - c. increasing lethargy
 - d. failure to eat and drink for more than 48 hours.

Call the clinic during our usual hours if you have any concerns. For emergencies when our clinic is closed, do not wait - go to the nearest animal emergency care hospital. (You are responsible for costs associated with any care rendered.)

13. All cats should be held for a minimum of 24 hrs after surgery. We strongly recommend female cats be held for 48 hrs.



Exceptions: A nursing mother (whose kittens you cannot locate) should be released as soon as she is alert enough – usually late the same night or very early the next morning.

14. In some cases, you may need to hold cats longer due to injuries (bite wounds, broken bones) or illnesses that require longer healing. Do not hold cats in traps longer than 7 days. In these cases, a long term set up is required. Never let cats loose in your house, bathroom or shed as it can be dangerous to catch the cat once it is time for release.

Releasing

15. Use your notes to be sure to return them to the precise location where the cat was trapped.
16. Place the trap on the ground, remove the cover and open the door. Face the trap toward a safe area, never toward the street or other dangers. Most cats need little if any encouragement to dart out of the trap.
17. Cats may be skittish for several days or weeks after trapping but they will eventually return to their usual behavior.
18. Always monitor the colony for new comers. Any new cats should immediately be trapped, neutered and ear tipped. Use your photo collection to help distinguish newcomers from your original colony members.

