



Humane Trapping Instructions

Trapping Basics

Get the cats used to being fed at the same place and time of day, and if possible, at night. Dusk is usually the best time to set traps. Then start by leaving an unset trap covered with a large towel during routine feeding so that the cats will get used to seeing and smelling it in the area. You can even tap on the trap or shake it so the cats hear its sound, and see it is harmless.

On the day before you are going to trap, do not feed the cats so that they will be hungry. Use smelly food like tuna or canned mackerel to bait the trap. Be certain to notify others who may feed the cats not to leave out food either.

Do not trap in the rain or the heat of the day without adequate protection for the trap. Use common sense.

Plan to trap so you do not have to keep the cats too long before surgery. Trapping the night before is best. Don't forget to bring a flashlight, spoon and can opener (if necessary).

Prepare the area where you will be holding the cats before and after the clinic. A garage, laundry room, bathroom or other sheltered, warm, protected area is best. Lay down newspapers to catch the inevitable stool, urine and food residue. You can use pieces of wood to elevate the traps off the newspaper to allow the mess to fall through and away from the cats. Keep the trap covered with a towel.

Prepare the vehicle you will use to transport the cats by covering the area with newspaper or a tarp/plastic.

Cats should not eat for 12 hours prior to surgery. Water can be available up to the time of surgery and is necessary if the cat is held in the trap for more than eight hours after capture.

Setting the Trap

Set the traps just before the cats' normal feeding time. Fold a piece of newspaper to line the bottom of the trap just covering the trip plate. Cats don't like walking on the wire surface, and the paper helps keep their feet from going through when you pick up the trap. Be sure the paper clears the bar on which the trap door closes and that the paper does not extend beyond the trip plate. One sheet from the daily newspaper works well when folded.

Place the trap on a level surface in the area where you usually feed them. Cats are less likely to enter a trap if it wobbles. If trapping in a public area, try to place the traps where they will not be noticed by a passerby who may not understand that you are not trying to harm the cat.

To avoid using a bowl, place the food on a small scrap of newspaper and then place the trap on top of the food so the food is far in the back of the trap. Be certain the cat does not have access to the food from outside of the trap. Make sure the food is hard to get, so the cat has to go into the trap as far as possible and will trip the trap without being injured as the door closes.

After baiting the trap, open the trap door by pushing the top of the door in and pulling the bottom of the door upward. There is a small hook attached to one 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. 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. This cover will help to camouflage the trap and serve to calm the cat after s/he is caught.

Waiting for Success

Never leave traps unattended. The trapped animal is vulnerable and could get injured inside the trap. Or a passerby could release the cat or steal the trap!

Wait quietly in an area where you can still see the traps without disturbing the cats, but not where the cats can see you or you will frighten them away. Your car or house window work very well. Check the traps every 15 to 30 minutes. You can usually hear the trap door shut after it is triggered. As soon as the intended cat is trapped, completely cover the trap and remove the trap from the area. When carrying the trap always use the handle and wear heavy gloves to protect yourself from bites and scratches. You may consider putting another trap in the same spot if you are trapping multiple cats.

When you get the captured cat to a quiet area away from other traps, lift the cover and check for signs that you have the correct animal and not a pet or previously neutered feral (look for an ear tip). 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 as described in the releasing instructions.

Lactating Females and Kittens

If you capture 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. A lactating female will continue to make milk after being spayed and can return to nursing kittens.

Females with kittens will be attracted by the sounds of their kittens, if the previously captured kittens are placed in a covered carrier just behind the trap. Similarly, kittens will be easier to trap if the previously captured mother is in the carrier. Place the door of the carrier facing the rear of the covered trap. Never place the “bait” animals in the trap or anywhere they may be harmed by the trapped animal.

If kittens are trapped, they can be tamed. For information on taming feral kittens go to the Alley Cat Allies web site at www.alleycat.org/resources.html and scroll down to Homing Feral Felines.

Releasing the Cats

If the cat does not seem to be recovering well from the surgery, consider having him/her checked by a veterinarian before releasing.

When cats are ready for release, return to the area in which they were captured and release them there. Do not relocate the animal! S/he will be disoriented and could die or be driven away by other cats in the area.

Be sure that the cat will not run into danger (like a busy street) when you release him/her.

When ready, simply hold the trap with the door facing away from you and open the door. The cat will probably bolt immediately out of the trap. NEVER PUT YOUR HAND IN THE TRAP. If the animal still will not leave, prop the door open with a stick and leave it for a while. A trapped skunk or possum, which is nocturnal, may decide to sleep in the trap all day and not leave the trap until dusk.

Cleaning and Return of Traps

After releasing the cat, hose off the traps and disinfect them with bleach (1 part bleach to 30 parts water). Allow this solution to sit for an hour, then spray liberally and scrub with clean water to remove the bleach solution. Residual bleach – wet or dry – is harmful to cats. Return all borrowed traps promptly so that they may be used for the next clinic. Never store traps in the “set” position (door open) as animals may wander into even unbaited traps.

General Precautions

If you need to open the trap to slip water in or for any other reason, take EXTREME CARE as the cat may try to lunge and could bite. Wear heavy gloves and open the trap only enough to slip the dish in. Never try to grab a feral cat if he/she is escaping. Don't stick fingers in the trap or allow children or pets near the trap. These are wild animals and will scratch and bite. Any bite or scratch should be taken seriously- seek medical attention immediately. If possible, DO NOT RELEASE the cat. The cat must be quarantined. Contact the animal control agency in your area for quarantine instructions.