



The Basics of Trapping

Preparing to trap:

- Get the cats used to being fed at the same place and time of day. You might try leaving the trap out and unset during routine feeding so that the cat(s) will get used to seeing and smelling it in the area.
- Don't feed the cats the day/night before you are going to trap so the cats will be hungry enough to go into the traps. Be sure to notify others who may feed the cats to refrain from feeding as well.
- Plan the trapping so the cats don't have to stay in the traps too long before the scheduled surgery. Trapping the night before is usually the best approach.
- Prepare the area where you will be holding the cats before and after surgery. A garage or other sheltered, warm, protected area is best. Lay down newspapers or towels to catch the inevitable stool, urine and food residue.
- Prepare the vehicle you will use to transport them as well. A tarp or towels/blankets to put the traps on in your vehicle is always recommended.
- Plan your day of trapping carefully. Remember that if you trap a cat and release it for any reason, it is unlikely that you will be able to catch it again...they learn very quickly.
- If there are young kittens involved, remember that they should not be taken from the mother before 5-6 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/eat cat food. If you wish to tame and foster the kittens to adopt out, they should be taken from the mother at 6-7 weeks. If you wait until the kittens are older than 8 weeks before trying to tame them you will find the job progressively harder with age. (Note: to end the cycle of reproduction, please have the kittens spayed/neutered before adopting them out. Kittens can be spayed/neutered when they are 8 weeks old and weigh 2 pounds.)

Setting the traps:

- Plan to set traps just before or at the cats' normal feeding time, whenever that may be.
- Don't trap in the rain or the heat of 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. Use common sense when assessing weather conditions.
- If your trap does not have a plastic lining in the bottom, cut a piece of cardboard that fits inside the trap and covers the bottom up to the trip plate, and a separate smaller piece that covers most of the trip plate. Cats don't like walking on the wire surface, and the cardboard helps to keep their feet from going through when you pick up the trap.
- Plan placement of traps on a level surface in the area where the cats are used to eating. 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. Also make sure that nothing obstructs and prevents the door from fully closing once the trap is tripped.
- Canned cat food is the recommended bait to be used. It is best not to put any bowls inside the trap to hold food since the animal can easily hurt itself on it in a panic or while recovering from anesthetic. You can use a small paper plate – or even a section of a paper plate or piece of cardboard.
- Spoon 2 or 3 splotches of food (about a teaspoon each) onto the plastic or cardboard in a trail leading to the trip plate, and a larger splotch all the way in the back (on the section of paper plate or cardboard) past the trip plate.
- After baiting the trap, open the trap door by sliding the rings or bar on the door all the way to the top. Lift open the door. When door is open, notice the bar that runs the length of the inside of the trap on the left side. Turn the bar so that the L-shaped end is turned inward and the trip plate is raised. Slightly lower the door so that the small nub on the door balances against the L-shape on the bar. Try poking the trip plate with a stick to see if the weight of the stick causes the door to close. If it does, you've done it right. Reset the trap. We recommend "testing" the trap away from the area you are trapping so the noise of the trap closing does not scare cats away.

Waiting for success:

- 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 (binoculars can be very helpful). Try to place the trap so you can clearly see if the door is closed or not when a cat(s) is around. Check traps every 15 minutes or so. You can often hear the traps trip from a distance.

- As soon as the intended cat is trapped, completely cover the trap with a large towel and move the trap to a safe secure location. Do not be alarmed if the trapped cat begins thrashing around in the trap trying to escape. Remain quiet and calm as you quickly cover the trap with the towel. It may be necessary to wait for a few seconds while the cat calms down before moving the trap. The towel should remain over the trap the entire time the cat is in the trap.
- When you get the captured cat to a quiet area away from the other traps lift the cover slightly and check for signs that you have the correct cat and not a pet or previously neutered feral. Cover the cat back up as soon as possible. Uncovered, the animal may panic and hurt itself thrashing around in the trap. At this point it is highly recommended to use zip ties to secure both the front and back doors to prevent any cats from escaping from their trap.
- Place another trap in the same place and repeat the process. Sometimes it is very helpful to set 2 traps side by side if you are trying to catch multiple cats.
- Of course, there is always the chance that you will catch some other wild animal attracted to the food. Simply release the animal quietly by opening the front door while straddling the trap so the animal has a clear path to exit the trap. You can also slowly roll the trap over onto its top so that the door will then drop open.

Holding procedures:

- After you have finished trapping, you will probably have to hold the cats overnight until you can take them to the vet. (Unless you have made previous arrangements with a vet).
- Place cats in the prepared protected area. You can feed them up until about 6-8 hours before surgery (3-4 hours for kittens). **DO NOT OPEN THE TRAP.** Just drop canned food through the top wires of the trap for them to eat. This will also give them a sufficient amount of water.
- After surgery, be sure to re-zip tie both ends of the trap prior to transport. Allow the cat to recover overnight in the same trap in a safe and secure location. Keep the traps covered and check on them 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 potentially wild animals who may 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 LOCAL ANIMAL CONTROL AGENCY FOR QUARANTINE INSTRUCTIONS.

- Wash and change clothes before having contact with your own pets as a precaution against spreading any contagious diseases or parasites 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. Check with your veterinarian and use caution.

Releasing the cats:

- Release the cat in the same place you trapped him or her. Make sure there isn't any traffic or other immediate dangers to the cat as it may run unpredictably from the trap. Straddle the trap and pull up rings or bar so you can open the front door of the trap and pull back the cover. Do not be concerned if the cat hesitates a few moments before leaving. He is simply reorienting himself to his surroundings. It is not uncommon for the cat to stay away for a few days after release; he will return eventually. Keep leaving food and water out; he may eat when you are not around.
- After releasing the cats please spray out the traps with a hose, or take them to a car wash to spray out debris before returning them to our facility.

If you have any questions or need further advice or assistance on trapping, please call us at (970) 484-8516

To make an appointment to have a cat(s) you have trapped spayed/neutered at our clinic, please call (970) 484-8516 - be sure to make arrangements with us before you trap!

Thank you for helping us to prevent homeless animals!

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