



CATS NIP

HOW TO TRAP CATS

Please read our entire packet of information, including “Clinic Policies for Free Surgical Services,” and the Surgical Release Form before bringing feral and free-roaming cats to WAIF’s CATsNIP clinic for surgery.

PLAN AHEAD

Gather blankets, sheets, or large towels to cover the traps while trapping and during transport. Garage sales and thrift stores are great sources.

Feed the cats at the same place and time of day (dusk is ideal) in order to get them on a reliable schedule for feeding. Most cats enter a trap the first day it arrives. Others require an accommodation period. If this is the case, leave an unset trap covered with a large towel in the feeding area. For several days before trapping, place food at the door, or inside a trap that is tied open and cannot shut.

Stop feeding the cats the day before trapping so they become hungry. Alert other people who also feed the cats. Never withhold water.

Prepare an area to hold the cats before and after surgery. A garage or other sheltered *warm*, protected area is vital. Spread newspapers on the floor to catch feces, urine, and food residue. Elevate the traps on pieces of wood or bricks, allowing waste to fall through the wire and away from the cats.

Prepare a vehicle for transport by laying down thick plastic to protect the carpet and upholstery.

If you are trapping cats daily and cannot catch all the cats in one day, continue withholding food during the trapping period. Hungrier cats are more likely to enter traps.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Feral and free-roaming cats are neither mean or vicious but they are scared. They are similar to wild animals and can cause serious injury. Traps also require care when setting.

Use extreme caution when working with traps. The trigger mechanism can accidentally release and cause serious injury.

Keep children and pets away from trap. Never stick your fingers into a trap.

Once a cat is trapped, wear heavy gloves when opening a trap to slip in food or water, or for any other reason. Open the trap only far enough to slip in the dish.

Never try to grab a feral and free-roaming cats if it’s escaping. The cat may lunge, bite and/or scratch to get away.

A bite or scratch should be taken seriously. Seek medical attention immediately.

If possible, do not release a cat that has bitten. Call the local health department or your veterinarian to discuss what to do with the cat.

Carry a cell phone when trapping in case of injury or trouble. If possible, bring a friend.

As a precaution against spreading contagious disease, wash and change clothes before having contact with your family or pets.

SETTING THE TRAP

If possible, set the traps just before or at the cats' normal feeding time. Dusk is usually the best time, but will vary depending on when the cats are used to being fed. Use caution and common sense – do not trap in the rain or heat of the day without adequate protection for the trap.

Place the traps on a level surface in the area where the cats usually feed or have been seen. 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. People passing by may interpret the purpose and assume you are trying to harm the cats. A good precaution is to write "Cat Rescue in Progress" on your trap cover. Some trappers also write a phone number where they can be reached, in case there are problems before they return to trap the cats.

Follow the directions for setting the trap. There are many traps available, but all have a trip plate that triggers the door to drop when a cat enters to get food.

Fold one sheet of newspaper to line the bottom, just covering the trip plate. Cats don't like walking on a wire surface, and the paper helps keep their feet from going through the wires 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. Too much newspaper with the trap mechanism will prevent the door from closing properly; a single piece works well when folded. A folded pillowcase also makes an ideal liner and is less messy than soiled newspaper.

Use smelly food such as canned cat food or dolphin-safe tuna to bait the trap. Place the food on a small scrap of newspaper and place the food far back in the trap, making sure there is no access to the food from outside the trap. Make the food difficult to reach so that the cat must enter the trap completely, as far as possible.

Cover the trap with a large towel or sheet. Fold the fabric to expose the opening while

still covering the top, sides, and back. This helps camouflage the trap and serves to calm the cat after being caught. Another great choice is waterproof vinyl, available at fabric stores. It provides protection from rain, sun and wind, and you can label it with permanent marker.

HARD TO TRAP CATS

Some cats won't come at the first or second invitation. Try more tempting or aromatic foods like canned mackerel or Kentucky Fried Chicken. Some trappers recommend catnip or valerian, which can be found in dry capsule form at health food stores. Mix a small amount with the food to avoid loose flakes from drifting outside of the trap. Happy cats might roll around outside, and set off the trap prematurely.

NURSING MOTHERS & KITTENS

If trapping a lactating female (one that is producing milk for kittens), you may want to wait until you have located the kittens and know that they are old enough to wean (4 to 6 weeks). If you catch younger kittens, you will need to feed them an appropriate kitten milk replacement product until they can be weaned. A mother will usually bring her kittens within view as weaning approaches.

Mothers will be attracted by the sounds of their kittens if they previously captured kittens are placed in a covered carrier just behind the trap. Place the door of the carrier facing the rear of the covered trap.

Similarly, kittens will be easier to trap if a captured mother is placed in an additional trap behind the first trap. Never place the "bait" animal in the trap, or where it may be hurt by another animal.

A lactating female will continue to make milk after being spayed and can return to nursing kittens, if necessary. If there is a possibility any kittens remain in the wild, she must be released to care for them 10 to 12 hours after surgery, but only if she is completely awake from anesthesia.

WAITING FOR SUCCESS

Never leave traps unattended in an unprotected area, but don't hang around within sight of the cats. (A trapped animal is vulnerable and could get injured inside a trap.) Wait quietly in an area where you can see the traps without disturbing the cats – perhaps a car or house window.

Check the traps every 15 to 30 minutes. If you're nearby, you can usually hear the trap door snap shut.

As soon as the intended cat is trapped, remain quiet, cover the trap completely and remove it from the area. Always use the handle and wear heavy gloves. If you are trapping multiple cats, consider putting another trap in the same spot.

When the captured animal is in a quiet area, check to make sure you have the correct cat, not another wild animal, pet or previously spayed/neutered cat (look for a tipped ear). If you did capture an unintended animal, release it as described under "Releasing the Cats" and "Uninvited Guests."

WAITING FOR THE CLINIC

If the trapped cats have to be held, place them in your prepared, protected area and keep the trap covered.

Cats should not eat within 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 8 hours after capture.

SURGERY DAY

Read "Clinic Policies for Free Surgical Services" for Check-in procedures. You will receive "Post-Op Instructions" on the back of each Medical Record when you pick up the cats. This will provide information about what to watch for and what to do.

RELEASING THE CATS

If the cat does not seem to be recovering well from surgery, consider contacting your

veterinarian before release. At the very least, keep the cat for another day of observation. It can be very difficult to recapture a cat after a recent release.

When cats are ready for release, return them to the area in which they were captured. Cats could become disoriented and die, or be driven away by other animals that have already "established" a territory. Returning a fixed cat to its capture location will help prevent other cats (that may not be fixed) from entering the territory that it's protecting. Each time cats are removed, the population will rebound through a natural phenomenon known as the "vacuum effect," drawing the community into a costly, endless cycle of trapping and killing.

You can learn more about this by visiting: www.alleycat.org/VacuumEffectScience.

When releasing the cat, make sure there are no nearby dangers, such as a busy street. If the cat is not frantic, remove the covering and allow it to observe the surroundings for a few minutes before release.

Plan the release according to the weather, time of day, traffic flow, kids getting out of school, etc. Use extreme caution and wear heavy gloves.

Stand in the opposite direction of where you want the cat to go, and let the cat observe where you are before releasing it. It will run away from you, so face it in the direction of its home.

When ready, place the trap with the door facing away from you and open the door. If your trap has a back door opposite the trap door, the release is easier.

Most likely the cat will bolt immediately out of the trap. If the cat is confused, tilt the trap so the back is slightly elevated and tap on the back of the trap. If the cat still will not leave, prop the door open with a brick or stone without blocking the entrance and leave for awhile.

UNINVITED “GUESTS”

Wild animals may sometimes enter a trap in search of food. Remain calm, but move with caution when releasing these animals.

Skunks and opossums are nocturnal animals who may decide to sleep in traps all day and not leave until dark. A skunk will not spray through the fabric covering and will waddle away once you have propped the door open. An opossum may hiss, but is extremely slow and will likely pretend it is dead (playing opossum) while you are present.

A raccoon will also hiss, but will leave the trap more readily. Raccoons are very adept at biting through the spaces in the trap, so be extremely cautious and cover the trap before reaching for the handle.

CLEANING THE TRAPS

Hose off the empty traps and disinfect them with a solution of 1 part bleach to 30 parts water. Allow the solution to dry, then rinse off very well. Bleach residue is harmful to cats.

Never store traps in the set (door open) position because animals may wander into unbaited traps.

Thank you to [Feral Cat/Spay Neuter Project](#) for providing source material for these trapping instructions.