

Trapping

Trap/Neuter/Return or TNR

Though the term “trapping” can seem a little daunting to people, humanely trapping cats to have them spayed/neutered is really an easy way to make a big difference in the lives of these cats and your community. Here are some trapping tips for you to help make the process seamless!

Do not set your traps without knowing where and when you can have the cats fixed after they are trapped. You never want to release a feral cat that you have not had fixed. Ferals will become "trap shy," and you will have a difficult time catching them again. Make sure you are able to take them into a clinic to be fixed before you start trapping – contact the clinic to confirm hours and availability, and make sure you are able to transport them at that time. If you are trapping at night, make sure you will be able to house the cat in a weather resistant environment overnight.

Make a plan. If your cats eat at your house at 6pm like clockwork (and so you’re most likely to trap them at 6pm), make sure you know what you’ll do with them until you can get them to a vet. Cats should not be left outdoors in traps – without being able to move they cannot keep themselves warm in the winter, cool in the summer, or safe from other predators and scary noises outside. Keep them in a temperature-controlled basement or garage if you can or, at least a barn or shed. If you’re planning to take your community cats to a clinic on a Thursday morning, you do not want to wait until Thursday morning to trap. You must plan ahead. If you feed your community cats at 6PM each evening and need to take them to a Thursday morning vet appointment for spaying/neutering, you need to SKIP their feeding on TUESDAY night so they will be hungry and enthusiastic to eat on Wednesday evening at 6 PM. As long as you skipped a day of feeding, you can place your baited traps out in the areas you normally feed anytime in the 4–6 PM timeframe on Wednesday evening. Once you’ve trapped your cats cover them immediately with and place them in a safe area for the overnight wait until they can be transported in the morning.



Never leave a trap unattended. The most important thing to remember about trapping is not to set a trap and leave it for hours without monitoring it. Cats (or any other animal that might wander into the trap) are vulnerable to people or other animals that might come by, as well as the elements, especially in the height of winter and summer. And cats in traps will all react differently; if a cat gets very anxious in a trap, and doesn't have their trapper nearby to cover them with a sheet and calm them down, they can injure themselves. So even if it's tempting to set the trap, go to bed, and see what you've caught in the morning, please don't!

Let the cat be your guide. Set your traps where and when the cats are used to being around. If you always feed the cats at 7am on your front porch, set your trap at 6:30am on your front porch. Set traps in areas where the cat is used to eating, sleeping, or walking. Traps set in the middle of your yard are seldom effective – cats like to lurk around boundary lines, so have traps set near the sides of houses, bushes, porches, garages, etc.

The kind of bait you choose is an art, not a science! Different cats respond to different kinds of bait. Typically, the go-to bait is a smelly fish like tuna or mackerel – cats can smell these from far off and it draws them in. But there are as many ways to lure a cat into a trap as there are cats out there. Successful trappers, if they don't catch their cats the first time, will switch their bait – anything from regular dry food to KFC chicken has worked in the past. Sometimes it's not food at all – catnip, a toy, or even luring the cat in with a laser pointer that you're guiding from afar can all lead to a trapped cat. If using food, place just a small amount of food inside the trap, 1–2 tablespoons is sufficient. This is enough to entice the cat but not so much that the cat will still have food in their stomach upon sedation at their vet appointment. Food in their stomach can cause complications during surgery.

Watch the trap without interfering with the trap. Though you don't want to leave a trap unattended, you also don't want to be a nuisance! Most feral and stray cats scatter when they sense people around – make sure you're not opening your door every 10 minutes to check the trap because you'll scare them off. Keep traffic in the area to a minimum, and don't make any noise!

Keep them covered! As soon as the cat is trapped, be ready to cover all sides of the trap with an old sheet or towel. When the cat is first trapped they are likely to be anxious; covering them with a sheet helps them feel safer and calms them down.

Thank you for supporting your community!