



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 free-roaming cats to the Feral Cat Spay/Neuter Project 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. Before bringing in cats, spray the area with a *cat-safe* flea spray to discourage fleas and ants.

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 of the cats in one day, continue withholding food during the trapping period. Hungrier cats are more likely to enter traps.

Give yourself time to trap the cats. Trapping only the night before a clinic may not provide sufficient time. If you trap several days before the clinic, provide clean bedding, food and water *every day*. If you have nowhere to comfortably house the cats, trap only the day before the clinic.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Free-roaming cats are neither mean nor 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 traps. 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 free-roaming cat 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. Have a flashlight if trapping at night or early morning.

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

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 of 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. Passerby may misinterpret 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 kinds of 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 of the trap, 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 can interfere with the trap mechanism or 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, then place the trap over the food. This enables you to remove the food prior to surgery simply by picking up the trap. 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 a permanent marker.

Just before leaving, you may want to push the hook ever so slightly back off the cylinder to create a "hair trigger." Don't get carried away with this, or the trap will trip as soon as the cat takes a sniff.

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 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 are weaned. A mother will usually bring her kittens within view as weaning approaches.

Mothers will be attracted by the sounds of their kittens if the 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 a carrier behind the 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 traps. Passersby may release the cat or steal the 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 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."

CATCHING MULTIPLE CATS WITH ONE TRAP

Some traps have a second door opposite the trap door. This “release door” slides straight up. If you have an airline-type cat carrier, you can safely release a trapped cat into it. (In fact, if you have several carriers, you can catch many cats in a relatively short period of time.)

Move the covered trap over to the carrier (don’t do this in front of other cats.) Place the “release door” end of the trap tightly against the open carrier door. Slide the “release door” up, uncover the trap – and be prepared to quickly move the trap away and slam the carrier door shut!

Most cats immediately run from the trap into the carrier because they want to hide. Be sure to brace the carrier against something such as your car tire, a tree, a wall, etc. Cats can energetically zoom into a carrier, knock it loose from your grip and escape. Be aware of even the smallest openings – cats will try to escape through them.

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, if possible return them to the area in which they were captured. Unless absolutely necessary, do not relocate the animal. Cats could become disoriented and die, or be driven away

by other animals in the area. Make sure there is no nearby danger, 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, 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 show 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 it 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.

PURCHASING TRAPS

Humane live traps are a convenient way to safely capture free-roaming cats for spay/neuter surgery. While traps are available to rent, depending on your needs it may be as cost effective to buy one or more. Various models are available; the following information may help you choose.

We recommend the Tru-Catch trap with TWO doors. The front door is the entry door; the back door (called a "guillotine" door) raises straight up.

A 2-door trap can make life a lot easier for a trapper. It is easier for cleaning, inserting food and water, and removing the cat for surgery after it is sedated. If you need to transfer the cat, the back door makes it easier with less risk of escape.

Tru-Catch traps are reliable, close quietly, are easy to set, and allow the cat ample room after the trap has sprung. The brown color makes better camouflage from passersby, and the rubbery coating makes them easier to clean. Many trappers have told us that Tru-Catch traps continue to operate smoothly after years of use, and are easier to set, fairly sensitive and seem to have fewer false trips.

Several cat-size models of 2-door Tru-Catch traps are available, and currently cost between \$50 and \$75 online. This brand also includes 1-door traps, so shop carefully to make sure you are ordering correctly. You can see them at the websites listed below. All of the websites include helpful information about trapping.

Heart of the Earth Marketing

1-800-526-1644
www.animal-traps.com

Animal Care Equipment & Services, Inc (ACES)

1-800-338-2237
www.animal-care.com

Another common style has slanted door(s), Havahart traps for example. Some styles have 1 door; some have 1 slanted front door and 1 guillotine back door; some have 2 slanted doors. These tend to be harder to operate, more cumbersome for putting in food and water, and are more difficult for transferring or removing cats after sedation. They are louder when tripped, which can scare away other cats in the trapping area. The edges are sharper and can scratch your vehicle during loading and unloading. If you choose this type, purchase the 2-door style with the slanted front and guillotine back doors for easier baiting, cleaning and transferring.

Havahart

1-800-800-1819
www.havahart.com

RENTING TRAPS

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Always call ahead for details, and to make sure traps are in stock. Rental fees may vary.

Crown Hill Pet Supply

9053 Holman Road NW
Seattle, WA 98117
206-783-9570

Hertz AA Rentals

Stores in West Seattle, Ballard, Greenwood, North Seattle, Des Moines and other Puget sound locations.

Homeward Pet Adoption Center

18800 Woodinville-Snohomish Road
Woodinville, WA 98072
425-488-4444
www.hootervillesafehaus.org

NOAH Adoption Center

31300 Brandstrom Road
P.O. Box 1603
Stanwood, WA 98292
360-629-7055
www.thenoahcenter.org

PAWS Animal Shelter

15305 44th Avenue W
Lynnwood, WA 98037
425-787-2500
www.paws.org



Mission Statement:

To save the lives of homeless cats by providing access to high volume spay/neuter surgery in a safe and humane environment, collaborating with others and mentoring like-minded organizations to increase spay/neuter in their regions.