

Trapping Protocol to Achieve Optimum Success

BEFORE YOU TRAP

Establish a Feeding Schedule

Feed the cat the same time and place every day and remove any uneaten food after 30-40 minutes. Early morning or dusk is the best time to feed; the cat quickly learns this routine. Remove empty food bowls to keep other animals, like skunks and raccoons away from the feeding area; always provide fresh water for the cat. Advise your neighbors not to feed the cat and to keep their pet cats indoors as much as possible while you are actively trapping.

Place the trap near the feeding station with the door tied open using a bungee cord, piece of rope or a zip tie. You want the trap to become part of the landscape. Place cardboard or a small towel inside the trap up to the trip plate; be sure not to interfere with the chain or the trap may not close properly. Choose a material that will not blow in the wind. Since cats like consistency use the same material throughout the entire trapping process.

At feeding time when you place food in the dishes, place an enticing “treat” food, like mackerel, herring, tuna or chicken in the trap behind the trip plate. Cats are curious and food motivated. They will enter the trap for the “treat” food without being trapped, thus losing their fear as well as receiving a tasty treat. When you see the cat has started eating the treat food inside the trap, call SCRUFF [518-526-3372](tel:518-526-3372) and schedule your TNR appointment.

Prepare a Holding Area and Transport Vehicle

Prepare a warm, environmentally-controlled area like a bathroom, basement or garage to hold the cat before and after surgery. A cat cannot regulate its body temperature after anesthesia. A good rule of thumb is if the room is too hot/cold for you, it is too hot/cold for the cat. Never set the trap on cold or slippery surfaces. If all you have as a holding area is a basement or garage elevate the trap on pieces of wood, a wooden pallet, or a low table. Line the floor with a tarp, shower curtain liner, newspaper or puppy pad liners; also protect your vehicle in the same manner while transporting the cat to and from the TNR clinic. If necessary secure the back of the trap with a carabiner clip for additional safety. Always remove soiled materials and replace with fresh newspaper.

TRAPPING

Bait and Set the Trap

Ideally you want to trap the cat the night before your appointment. Make sure no other food is available while traps are set. Remove the bungee cord, piece of rope or zip tie. Place cardboard or a small towel inside the trap up to the trip plate and be sure not to interfere with the chain or the trap may not close properly. Choose a material that will not blow in the wind. Place a tiny amount of bait food outside the trap then a little leading inside to more food behind the trip plate. The cat must go to the back of the trap to step on the plate to trip the trap. Set the trap. Traps must be on level ground or they may prematurely close and scare the cat away. After you set the trap, leave the area so you are out of the cat's view and wait.

Check Traps Frequently

While trapping, never leave traps unattended. A trapped animal is vulnerable and could get injured inside the trap. Never leave a trap set overnight; never trap more than one cat in a trap as two frightened cats may cause injury to each other. **DO NOT** trap without a spay/neuter appointment set up.

YOU TRAPPED A CAT!

Once the cat is trapped, immediately cover the trap with a sheet, towel, or blanket. Covering the trap will reduce the cat's stress and prevent it from thrashing around in the trap possibly causing injury. If the trapped cat has a tipped ear or if a wild animal has been trapped release immediately. Otherwise, move the trapped, covered cat to the prepared holding area.

Limit Food and Water

Hold the cat in the trap until your appointment. The night before surgery withhold food and water after midnight. Cats like small enclosed spaces and a covered trap provides security. A cat will usually remain calm as long as they are covered. Check on them periodically.

Do Not Handle the Cat

A cat that feels threatened may scratch and bite. Don't allow children or owned pets near the traps. In order to prevent potentially spreading any contagious diseases, after trapping wash hands and change clothes and shoes before handling pets. All animal bites are serious! If bitten, seek immediate medical attention and do not release the cat because it will need to be quarantined.

TRAPPING MULTIPLE CATS

Monitor all the Traps

If you are using multiple traps spread the traps out. Once a cat is trapped the activity inside the trap may disturb other cats encouraging them to keep their distance. As cats are trapped cover the traps quickly (calming the trapped cats) and move them to an area away from the other traps and/or cats (reducing the likelihood that additional cats will become too nervous to be trapped).

Be careful when moving the trapped cats. The cats can move back and forth quickly inside the trap making it difficult to handle. In some instances, moving the cats will be more disruptive than leaving them where they are (which is one reason some people prefer to trap with a trap cover already in place). Use your best judgement.

You may want to consider using a drop trap if there are multiple cats to be trapped. This type of selective trapping might be desirable if you're after young kittens, a pregnant female, an injured cat or the one colony member you missed when you trapped the rest.

SURGERY DAY

Arrive at your scheduled appointment to drop off the cat. You will receive a call from the clinic when your cat is ready for pick up.

AFTER SURGERY

Monitor Cat in Trap Overnight

Check on the cat every couple of hours to ensure the cat is wide awake and moving around. It takes an adult cat 24 hours to fully recover from anesthesia and regulate its body temperature.

After surgery cats are disoriented and unable to defend themselves and the traps provide protection. Keep the cat in the covered trap in the same warm, environmentally-controlled area as before, until fully recovered and ready to be returned to its original location.

Withhold Food and Water in the Traps

Do not give the cat food or water in the trap. The cat may spill the water and may vomit if fed. Food and water may be provided in the morning after surgery when fully awake before being returned.

RETURNING CAT TO ENVIRONMENT

After 24-48 hours, return the cat to the site where it was trapped. Provide fresh food, water and an outdoor shelter. The cat may disappear for a few hours or days, but will return after he has calmed down.

Returning Leased Trap

Per SCRUFF lease agreement, in order to receive your full check or cash deposit traps must be returned undamaged and in clean condition. Traps should be lightly sprayed with disinfectant, rinsed off with a hose and allowed to air dry. If you don't have a hose available, traps can be cleaned using disinfectant and a power hose at a car wash. Bleach is not recommended.

HOW TO TRAP A FERAL MOM AND HER KITTENS

What do you do if you find a mom cat and her kittens? The best thing is to have the mom cat spay and the kittens when they are old enough. For more detailed information on trapping a feral mom cat and her kittens check out <https://www.alleycat.org/community-cat-care/trapping-mom-and-kittens/> and <http://feralcatfocus.org/humane-trapping-kittens-moms/>.

Additional information provided with permission from Alley Cat Allies and Feral Cat Focus.

EMERGENCIES

Complications from surgery, while rare, do occur. If a cat is bleeding, vomiting, having difficulty breathing, or lethargic and not waking up after several hours, call your local 24/7 veterinarian emergency clinic.

If the cat is vomiting, his/her head should be turned so that the liquid can come out. This may be achieved by tipping the trap somewhat so that the cat's position shifts. **CAUTION:** Only open the trap door or handle the cat in the event of extreme emergency and only if you are confident that you will not be injured in so doing. If you must open the door, do so in an enclosed room and wear thick gloves to decrease possible injury. Do not leave the cat in vomit. If possible clean the trap by pulling out the soiled cardboard or towel and slipping clean cardboard or towel underneath the cat. If a second trap is available, place the traps back to back and encourage the cat to go into the freshly lined, clean trap. Be sure to keep the trap covered during this process and butted against something solid to prevent the trap from moving.