

Post-operative Care

Feral cats are easily stressed. In order to minimize additional stress after surgery, please follow these discharge instructions fully. If the cat is truly feral, do not attempt to handle the cat. You risk serious injury to yourself and/or to the cat if you attempt to handle a feral cat.

Hold/Monitor/Keep Warm

If you have trapped a nursing mom, the cat should be returned as soon as medically safe so she can return to care for her kittens. Medically safe means the cat should be totally awake and alert. Otherwise, cats should remain in their covered traps during the recommended minimum 24 hour recovery period. Keep cats longer during inclement weather or extreme outdoor temperatures, or if a cat was pregnant and needs more time to recover. 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.

Safety

Keep the traps covered with a sheet or blanket and NEVER move the cats to a larger cage. Unless performing an emergency or caregiving task, keep the trap secured at all times. Do not stick your fingers through the bars of the trap or attempt to touch or handle the cats. Even when anesthetized stray or feral cats may react to strangers or noisy activities; therefore, you or the cat could be injured. Even if the cats appear unconscious, they may still get out of the trap if you open the door.

Check Hourly

Check the cats every hour to monitor their progress. It is normal for cats waking up from anesthesia to be wobbly and disoriented. If the cat is awake and sitting up or moving around, they are doing well. Continue to keep the trap covered and the area quiet. The anesthesia may have hallucinogenic effects and cause the cats to overreact to normal stimulation or to become aggressive. The anesthesia will wear off between 4 to 24 hours. There should be no signs of bleeding.

Feeding

Adult cats may spill water or vomit if fed the same day as the surgery. Therefore, food and water should be withheld from adult cats until the morning after surgery when the cat is fully awake and prior to being returned. Kittens that are four months old or younger should receive a small amount of food after they are completely awake and alert. A small amount of canned food can be placed on a plastic lid with a little water around it. The cats may not have an appetite or may be too scared to eat. When feeding the cats, lift the back door of the trap very slowly so that only a small gap is open. Slide the lid into the trap quickly without

putting your hand inside and always keep an eye on the cat. If the cat moves toward the opening, close the door immediately to avoid letting the cat out and relock the trap door.

Cleaning Soiled Traps

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. Use extreme caution if opening the door of the trap. Only raise the door a crack to pull out soiled materials. If you are unable to slide fresh paper into the trap, DO NOT reach inside or lift the door further. Instead, place the trap on top of the folded newspaper so that the paper underneath the trap can absorb any waste.

Returning the Cat

After the 24 hour recovery period, return the cats to the site where they were trapped. Provide fresh food, water and an outdoor shelter. The cats may disappear for a few hours or days, but will return after they have calmed down.

Sutures

The cats do not need to return to the clinic for suture removal as dissolvable sutures were used.

Extra Care

If you must keep the cats longer than one night, continue to provide food along with water. Moist food is preferable because it is more easily digested. Do not use glass bowls inside traps.

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.