

Post-Surgery Recovery Care

Congratulations on successfully trapping and bringing a community cat to be spayed/neutered and vaccinated! You have not only made this cat's life better, but also helped prevent additional litters from being born. Here are SCRUFF's recovery instructions for your awareness and action. Please follow these instructions carefully, as recovery is the most critical period for cats undergoing surgery and cats must be monitored continuously.

A feral cat is easily stressed. Do not attempt to handle it, as you risk serious injury to yourself and/or the cat.

Monitor the Cat After Surgery and Keep It Warm

A recovering cat should remain in its covered trap during the recommended minimum 24-hour recovery period to allow the anesthesia to completely leave the cat's system. Keep the cat longer during inclement weather or extreme outdoor temperatures, or if a cat was pregnant and needs more time to recover. If you have trapped a nursing mom, return to original trapping location when medically safe so she can properly care for her kittens. *Medically safe* means the cat should be totally awake and alert.

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. If all you have is a basement or garage, do not place the trap directly on the cold, damp floor. Do not expose the cat to any drafts, which will induce chilling. Instead, place the covered trap on pieces of wood, a wooden pallet, or a low table that is not slippery. Prior to placing the cat in the recovery area, protect the floor with a tarp; shower curtain liner, newspaper or puppy pad liners. 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 zip tie or carabiner clip for additional safety. Always remove soiled materials and replace with fresh newspaper or cardboard.

Safety

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

Check Hourly (minimally)

Check the cat at least once every hour to monitor its progress. It is normal for a cat waking up from anesthesia to be wobbly and disoriented. If the cat is awake, sitting up, or moving around and alert, it is doing well. Continue to monitor the cat, keep the trap covered and the area quiet. The anesthesia can have hallucinogenic effects and cause the cat to overreact to normal stimulation or to become aggressive. The anesthesia will wear off completely within 24 hours. There should be no signs of bleeding. If you see active bleeding, see EMERGENCIES section below.

Feeding

Feed kittens a small amount of food after they are completely awake and alert. Mix a small amount of canned food with a little water, place on a plastic lid and carefully slide inside the trap.

For adult cats, wait eight hours after surgery before feeding canned food mixed with a little water on a plastic lid. 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 it out and relock the trap door.

A kitten or cat may not have an appetite, however, or may be too scared to eat. This is normal.

Changing Trap Paper

If possible, clean the trap by pulling out the soiled cardboard or newspaper and slip clean cardboard underneath the cat. If you are not comfortable changing the soiled cardboard, you may instead change the bedding/liner beneath the trap.

Returning The Cat

After the recommended 24-hour recovery period, return the cat in the covered trap to the site where it was originally trapped and carefully open the door for the cat to exit the trap. Provide fresh food, water and an outdoor shelter per SCRUFF protocol. The cat may disappear for a few hours or days, but will return after it has calmed down.

Sutures

The cat does not need to return to the SCRUFF clinic for suture removal, as dissolvable sutures were used.

Extra Care

If you must keep the cat inside the trap longer than one night, continue to provide food mixed with water. Feed small amounts of food at first. Moist food is preferable because it is more easily digested. Do not use glass bowls inside traps.

Emergencies

While rare, complications from surgery may occur. If a cat is bleeding, vomiting, having difficulty breathing, or lethargic, **call your local 24/7 veterinarian emergency center/hospital as soon as possible.**

If the cat is vomiting, its head should be turned so the vomit does not choke the cat. This may be achieved by tipping the trap to shift the position so its head is facing downward. **CAUTION:** Only open the trap door or handle the cat in the event of an **extreme** emergency and only if you are confident that you will not be injured in doing so.

Returning the 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. Do not use bleach.