

## General Information:

- **Why TNR?** This process allows cats to live healthier, longer lives without the stress of fighting and disease associated with reproduction.
- **Why return the cats?** Most community cats are not social enough to make good pets. If they are trapped and not returned, they are either stressed or often may be euthanized (because they don't make good pets!) Also, if you trap the cats and do not return them, it creates a "vacuum effect" and new cats will move in take advantage of the resources in the area. If you return the spayed and neutered cats to the colony site, they will hold their territory and live out their lives without reproducing. Eventually, the colony will shrink by attrition.

## Before you trap:

- **Assess the colony** – how many cats are there? Are other community members feeding and caring for the cats? Are any of the cats obviously sick or injured? Are there any kittens under the age of 8 weeks?
- **Create, and have people fill out a TNR request** form and attend a TNR information session and trapper training. The form will help you keep statistics and track colonies and caretakers. This way if a cat is brought to the shelter, you know who to call. They will come and get their cat.
- **Are the cats healthy? Are any sick or injured?** Cats that need immediate attention should be trapped right away and taken to a Veterinarian that understands how to work with feral community cats. There is certain protocol to follow. For example, feral cats should be given convenia, a long lasting antibiotic because the caretaker will not be able to give the cat medicine.
- **Identify a safe overnight holding/recovery area** before the cats' surgeries. The holding area should be dry, temperature-controlled (about 75-degrees), and away from other pets. Acceptable locations include bathrooms, basements, or garages. Ensure that all entries/exits and windows are closed. Keep the cat in the trap! Keep the trap covered with a sheet so the cat can't see out. It keeps them calm.
- **Secure help** for the day-of trapping. Trapping by yourself, especially if it's your first time, can be overwhelming and exhausting. Having a companion is a good safety precaution, especially if you're trapping at night or in an unfamiliar location. NEVER leave traps unattended, especially overnight. The cats are sitting ducks for wild animals and people with bad intentions.
- **Gather all your equipment.** You'll need at least one trap per cat, but we recommend having a few extras.
- **Practice** setting the traps ahead of time. It's important to be comfortable with your equipment for your own peace of mind and the cats' safety. You also want to make sure all the traps are in working order!
- **Label the traps** with your name, phone number, and information about what you're doing, for example: *Humane trapping for veterinary care in progress, cats will not be harmed and should not be touched.* Waterproof the sign by enclosing it in a plastic covering or bag.
- **Count your traps** and make sure you pick all of them up when you are done.
- **Pay attention to the weather.** Never trap in extreme temperatures, hot or cold.

## When you're ready to trap:

- **Plan Ahead!** You should start trapping the day before the appointment.
- **Talk with other neighbors** and community members to make sure that no one else is feeding the cats during training and trapping
- **Start training** cats to eat at the same time every day at least two weeks in advance.
  - Feed the cats at the same time and in the same location every day. Try to keep this location away from areas where there is a lot of human traffic as community cats tend to fear people.
  - Trap train the cats by keeping the trap doors tied or locked open and feed the cats in and near the traps to get them used to going in and out.

#### Trapping:

1. **Set up and prepare for trapping.** Do all of your set up and preparation away from the colony site. Community cats, in general, are fearful of people. Trapping will go more smoothly if you don't disrupt the cats' feeding area.
2. **Withhold food twenty-four hours before trapping,** but always provide water. This will ensure the cats are hungry enough to go into the traps. Remind other caregivers and neighbors to withhold food as well.
3. Prepare the traps:
  - a) **Line the bottom** of the trap with newspaper folded lengthwise.
  - b) **Tag the traps** with a description of the location so you can return the cat to the exact place you trapped it. This is very important especially if there are kittens.
  - c) **Check that the trip plates** on the traps are functioning properly.
  - d) **Bait the traps** with about 1 tablespoon of bait (tuna, sardines, or other strong-smelling food). Place it at the very back of the trap so the cat will step on the trigger plate to reach it. Drizzle some of the juice or place a very small amount of food at the front of the trap to encourage the cat to enter.
  - e) **Place a sheet over just the back** part of the trap so it's ready to cover the trap after you catch a cat. Once the cat goes in the trap, fully cover the trap immediately to calm the cat and keep it from hurting itself.
4. **Set the traps.** Place a trap on flat, stable ground (if the trap tips or is on an incline, the cats will not enter). If you are using multiple traps, stagger them and have them facing different directions. Try to place the traps where they will attract a cat and be camouflaged, for example, near a bush
5. **Keep track of the traps at all times.** Never leave the traps unattended, and check them frequently (from a distance). Choose a location to park your car and wait where you are far enough away to give the cats a sense of safety, but close enough so that you can see them. If you have a large colony with multiple trapping locations, you may need multiple trappers to watch the traps. Take an exact count of your traps so that you do not miss one and accidentally leave a cat in a trap!
6. You may trap cats that are already ear tipped. If you do, it is sometimes best to hold that cat in the trap, covered, until the cats you are aiming for have been trapped. Release the ear tipped cat after trapping the others.

7. **After the cat has been trapped**, cover the entire trap with a large towel or sheet before moving it. Covering the traps will help to keep the cats calm. Move trapped cats away to a quiet, safe area to avoid scaring any remaining, un-trapped cats.

It is normal for cats to thrash around inside the trap. You may be tempted to release a thrashing cat because you fear that she will hurt herself, but cats calm down once the trap is covered. Remember, you are doing this for her benefit. If she is released, she will continue to breed, and you may not be able to trap her again. Also, most injuries from traps are very minor, such as a bruised or bloody nose or a scratched paw pad.

When an entire colony is being trapped from the same area, it does not make sense to take each cat from the location directly after the trap is sprung. This could disturb the area and scare the other cats away. Instead, when you are setting the traps out you can partially cover them to help calm the cats once they are trapped. Since they will at least have part of the trap that is covered, they can feel safe and you can keep the trap where it is. This helps reduce stress to the trapped cat and reduce the odds of other cats being frightened away.

Keep in mind that these are guidelines and some situations will call for you to deviate from them. For example, if a cat is severely thrashing around you may need to go ahead and cover the trap and remove it from the area, or if you are trapping in cold weather, cats should be covered and moved to a warm location (like your car) as soon as they are trapped.

During a quiet moment when no other cats are investigating the set traps, or if the trapped cats are making noise and deterring other cats from approaching the traps, remove the full traps and put them in the holding vehicle. Re-bait any traps that have had the bait eaten but have not sprung.

8. **Some cats may be hard to trap.** Cats can become trap-shy—frightened to go near or enter a trap, or trap-savvy—mastered the art of removing food without triggering the trap. You may need to use a drop trap for the hard to catch cats.
9. **Count your traps again** when you are finished to ensure you didn't leave any traps behind.
10. **Take the cats to a veterinarian or a spay/neuter clinic.** Let the clinic know if the cat is nursing or there are young kittens at the site. Removing the mom may have to be delayed until the kittens are older. Young kittens absolutely need their mothers or they could die within hours.
11. You should have already made appointments for sterilization and vaccination before beginning to trap. If your appointments are not the same day as the trapping, keep the cats indoors in their covered traps and make sure they are dry, in a temperature-controlled environment, and away from dangers such as toxic fumes, other animals, or people. If it is too hot or too cold for you outside, then do not leave the cats outside. They can succumb to heat stroke or hypothermia too.

12. **Transporting the cats to the clinic!** Never transport the cats in the trunk of a car or in the bed of a pick-up truck – this can be dangerous and it scares the cats. If a cat is pregnant, she may have her babies if scared.

Re-Releasing the Cats:

1. **Keep the recovering cats indoors for 12 to 24 hours**, unless otherwise noted on the discharge form. Observe the cat for any vomiting, bleeding, excessive sleepiness. If you notice any of these things, please contact your Veterinarian.
2. You may wish to feed them a small meal in the traps before release. Some cats will not eat in the trap, so please do not worry.
3. Once the cats are on their feet and fully awake, they are ready to go back to their colony. Keeping cats longer than recommended may cause undo stress on the cat.
4. Return the cat to the exact place you trapped it. Partially uncover the trap and lift the door. The cat may take a few minutes to acclimate before leaving the trap.
5. It may be a few days before you see this cat again. Cats tend to hide when they're stressed or scared. Please continue to make food and water available to all the cats in the colony. Even though you may not see at cat for a few days, it could be eating while you're not around.
6. Disinfect all the traps and let them dry.