

## Very Important Discharge Instructions for Feral Cat Caretakers

Thank you for helping lessen the burden of cat overpopulation. Here are some guidelines to help keep you safe and help your feral have an easy post operative experience. Most cats are given a long acting injection of anesthetic for their surgery. Many cats will have only partially recovered from anesthesia at the time of discharge since full recovery may take 24 hours. You need to monitor the cats for 24 hours following discharge in order to provide the best care possible for the cats.

**MAKE SURE YOU HAVE THE CLINIC OR VETERINARY HOSPITAL'S EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS BEFORE LEAVING THE FACILITY IN CASE YOU NEED TO SPEAK TO SOMEONE.**

PREPARE A COMFORTABLE sheltered area for holding the cats after surgery. A garage may work well, provided the season you are trapping in is not too hot, too cold. Keep cats away from drafts. In the summer when it's dreadfully hot, I keep recovering cats on my covered porch on the shady side. My garage is way too hot but perfect in the winter providing I elevate the trap with 2x4's so the trap isn't on the cold cement floor. See more about that below\*.

Cats recovering from anesthesia are particularly prone to chilling which will prolong recovery and may be dangerous. Place newspapers or plastic on the floor to catch urine, stool, and food that will fall from the trap. I often use old shower curtains or the dollar store ones and can hose it down if it's not too badly soiled to use again.

\*Bricks or Two 2 x 4 boards should be used to elevate the traps off the ground so that cats are not sitting in their waste or on cold (damp).

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING CAREFULLY: Some information may be redundant

- Please keep the cats in their traps until the next morning. Be sure traps are loosely \*covered with a large sheet or towel which provides protection and security. Cats not covered experience anxiety when they realize they can't get out. The covering keeps them calm. Sheets or large towels work great. Do not use rubberized sheets or tarps which would inhibit air flow and make it difficult to breathe.
  - Do Not Continually lift sheets after initial monitoring that first day. The idea is to keep them calm and they don't need humans staring at them.
  - Many cats will be groggy and need to sleep overnight. Please do not disturb them by reaching into the trap - they often overreact and may bite!
  - Cats are susceptible to heat and cold while recovering from anesthesia.
  - Normal behaviors that occur during recovery include deep sleep, head bobbing, wobbly movements, fast breathing, and shivering.
- No cat should be released the next day if it is still showing signs. !!!

Abnormal behaviors during recovery include continued bleeding from the surgery area. Bleeding from the left ear crop is expected but should stop by the time of release the next day. Calling the special after-surgery number is imperative so you can make sure there is nothing very wrong with the cat or you will be asked to transport it back to the clinic.

Feeding/Watering After Surgery:

Once the cats are fully alert and able to stand without being wobbly, they may be offered food and water. Some cats may be able to eat a small meal and some water the evening following surgery. It is important not to feed them too much as they may vomit if they eat too much so soon after anesthesia.

IDEAS: If filling a water bowl, only fill half an inch of water at the bottom. This will keep the cat dry and safe. Wobbly cats will knock over water bowls. They are in a tight place and also will use the trap for all their relieving needs. Use one end or the other for giving nourishment. You can fill a bowl with a watering can through the side or top of the trap grate.

However, we've discovered a safe way to feed and get hydration into cats while trapped is to put wet (canned) food on a paper plate mixed with extra water to make a gruel. Choose a side you want the trap to have the food on and lift the trap up and over the plate squishing the plate of gruel through the grating floor. Using this manner will keep fingers safe and they will get extra water in their food.

Some clinics place newspaper or other soft material on cage floor and if this is the case, you may have to pull some material carefully out to make sure the paper plate method works.

THE MORNING FOLLOWING SURGERY: Cats can be fed a large meal and some water. Again, watch your fingers and if using the water bowl idea (above) make sure it's not too high. Remember you will not want water spilling later on when you transport cat back to its colony.

RELEASING THE CATS - ONLY RELEASE CATS THAT ARE FULLY AWAKE!!

If cats are fully awake the next day, they can be released in the same location from which they were trapped. Relocating cats is rarely successful. They will either be driven off by territorial cats or other animals or follow their natural instinct to return home. If you are bringing animal to a new safe barn home, be sure to look over the barn cat buddy protocol and discuss this with cat's new caretaker.

To release the cat, point the back of the trap away from danger, such as a busy street. Pull away the cover so you can tell if the cat is facing the door, unlock back door, and lift the door away from the trap. Stand back and patiently allow the cat to leave at its own pace. Usually it will run away immediately.