

Trapping 101

Plan, Prepare, Protect

Start a feeding schedule at least two weeks prior to trapping. Whenever possible, feed the cats in open (un-set) traps for several days prior to the evening/morning you decide to trap.

You can use a bungee cord or zip tie to keep the trap door open to get the cats used to eating in the trap. Make sure the food is in the way back of the trap so the cat will go all the way in, step on the plate and shut the trap door. Before you do anything, make sure there is a sheet or large enough towel that can cover the entire width and length of the trap.

*Feed at your regular times and keep the trap covered as you would on the actual trapping day. The day before you set the trap, withhold ALL food & place a small bit the evening or day you intend to trap making sure the food is all the way in the back of trap so the cat is forced to step on the trip plate. Bait: sardines in water, tuna in oil, fancy feast fish food or anything else smelly and tasty. * Always check ahead with the clinic to make sure of days and hours they are open as you do not want to keep the cat in a trap for extended periods of time.*

Preparing the Trap: line trap floor with newspaper: It's easier for the cat's paws to rest on the paper and not wire. *Cut an old sheet to the size of the trap and long enough to touch the floor so cat cannot see out when trapped. I prefer having trap covered when feeding to get cat used to the trap so nothing looks different the day of actual trapping.

Place 'bait' as far back in the trap as possible so cat is sure to set the trap door closed. Trickle a little in front of the trap and a little in the center of the trap as well. *Never leave an open can in the trap as cats have cut their tongues and gotten their heads caught in cans.*

*Why Cover? : Once the cat is in a trap and realizes 'I'm in here and can't get out' s/he will become panicked & run from end to end cutting up his/her face in an attempt to escape. We have learned that when cats cannot see outside they are more relaxed and settle in. If it's a windy day, put rocks along sheet edges so sheets don't fly up.

Stay with the Trap: Never leave the trap unattended. An unintended possum or raccoon could wind up trapped and then you have to deal with releasing it or someone can decide to take a 'free' trap. Do stay within watching distance. You will also need to discourage more than one cat from going into the trap.

If a second cat goes into trap: Do not attempt to separate them, just bring a separate trap to clinic for 2nd cat to go into after surgery.

Once Cat Is Trapped: Leave it alone, don't lift the sheet up to examine or talk to it as this will only stress the cat out and s/he may begin the bouncing around you tried to avoid in the first place.

But It Seems So Sweet: The cat may seem docile or 'tame' in the trap because it is scared & calm from the sheet covering it. **DO NOT STICK YOUR FINGERS INSIDE TRAP.** If you are bitten this means a hospital visit for you and a 10 day quarantine for the cat or worse. Health Departments take animal bites seriously & may insist on euthanizing the cat & testing for RABIES.

Prior to Placing Trap in your vehicle: Line the seat area where the trap will sit with tarp/pee pad or something plastic. If kitty relieves him/herself while in transport you will be glad you planned ahead. Please DO NOT ever put a cat in a trap or in a carrier in the trunk of your car.

If Trapping Night before Surgery: Choose a safe/quiet spot to overnight the trapped cat. Keep in mind the season you are trapping. Garages are hot in summer/cold in winter. Keep sheet over the cat and you can add a light blanket if very cold. If you do not have a basement or garage to overnight PRIOR to surgery, keep it on a porch safe from other animals. *See the 2x4 idea below...

After Surgery: A porch may be too cold or drafty so if at all possible, find an indoor space that is draft-free. To protect your floors from feces/urine put some type of plastic down. If you have 2x4's or wood, place that on top of the plastic and the trap sitting on the wood. This keeps them off the cold floor and allows feces to drop through cage so cat does not sit in dirt after surgery.

Feeding: For both you and the cat's safety, do not open trap door to feed/water cat. I have had cats escape in my garage and it took forever to re-trap them. Instead use this great trick. Get a paper plate and put some canned food with some extra water mashed into it on the plate. Check where the cat is laying/sitting and lift the opposite end of the trap, placing the paper plate under it. The food will squish through the floor and cat can eat without chance of escape or hands involved.

Keep cat in trap overnight after surgery: If you are told you have trapped a nursing mom it will still be spayed/but will need to reunite with her litter sooner. Follow the clinic or doctor's instructions if that is to occur.

Release Day: Take the cat BACK to the spot where you trapped it and position the trap so it faces away from traffic and towards woods or a backyard. Stand behind the trap & lift the door until cat leaves.

*Most cats will run and never look back but some will 'freeze' in the trap unsure of what to do. In this case you can secure the door open with string or bungee cord and simply wait. Sometimes 'gently' tapping the back of the trap encourages him to leave.

REMEMBER: Stay with the trap as long as the cat is still in it.

Disclaimer: This handout is for educational purposes only.

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