



## **Step-by-Step Instructions for a Successful Trap-Neuter-Return Program**

### **1) MAKE AN APPOINTMENT**

ACR operates a TNR clinic for feral cats on Thursdays and Fridays by appointment only. Please contact our office to make an appointment. We ask for a \$50 donation (cash, check, credit card) to help cover the cost of surgery and treatment. Feral cats are sterilized, ear-tipped, vaccinated against rabies, distemper, and the Feline Leukemia Virus, and are treated for internal parasites and fleas. Feral cats are thoroughly examined and any wounds or injuries are also treated.

### **2) RENT TRAPS**

If you do not own traps, you may rent them from ACR or from another animal welfare group. We rent humane traps for a refundable \$50 deposit. We accept credit card or personal check. The rental is per trap, and you are allowed to rent two traps at a time for a two-week period; however, other arrangements can be made for larger trapping projects. ACR will fully refund your deposit upon the return of the traps. Please contact the office to arrange for trap rental/pick up.

### **3) PREPARE THE TRAPS**

\*\*Please note, prior to trapping, you may want to discuss your intentions (why you are TNRing) with neighbors to prevent any misconceived notions surrounding feral cats and TNR in general. For tips on talking with neighbors and handling common complaints about cats, please see ACR's Cats and Communities factsheets under our [Cats and Feral Facts](#) section of our website.\*\*

Unlatch the rear door so you can get your hands inside the trap. Be sure to re-lock the rear door before trapping. Fold newspaper lengthwise and place it inside the bottom of the trap to disguise the wires. Place about one tablespoon of bait in the very back of the trap, on the opposite side of the trip plate. We suggest using canned tuna in oil, fried chicken or canned cat food as bait. You can also use a lid or container for this if you wish. Drizzle some juice from the bait along the trap toward the entrance in a zigzag pattern. Place about one-fourth teaspoon of bait in the middle of the trap on the trip-plate, and one-fourth teaspoon about six inches inside the front of the trap. The cat will move his paws trying to get the zigzagged bait, thus springing the trap.

It is important not to leave too much bait in the front or middle; this may satisfy the cat, and he could leave without setting off the trap. Cover the traps with a towel or sheet, leaving the traps uncovered in the front and back, so to the cat it appears as if he can go straight through the traps. Always cover the cat when trapped; this helps to calm the cat during transportation.

### **4) SET THE TRAPS**

Take the traps to the trapping site and place them on stable ground – make sure they will not rock or tip. Stagger the traps and place them facing in different directions. Try to think like a cat and place the traps where it will be tempting. Move quietly and slowly, and try to remain relaxed so your mannerisms will not frighten cats away.

Set and cover the traps, then leave the area quietly. A cat is unlikely to enter a trap if you are standing nearby. You will want to periodically check on the traps quietly from a distance to see if you've trapped a cat and also to make sure that the trap hasn't been stolen. You do not want to leave a cat in the trap for too long, as someone who does not understand your intentions may release a trapped cat.

If you happen to trap wildlife, such as a raccoon, release them immediately by opening the trap and stepping back to allow them to escape. Most will run in the opposite direction but be cautious.

Trapping an outdoor cat may take some time – be patient. Make sure the trap is sprung, and the cat securely trapped, before you approach the trap. If you come out too soon, you may frighten the cat away. Keep the cat/trap covered from this point forward.

## **5) PLACE CATS IN HOLDING AREA**

Try to trap the night before, or the morning of the day you will bring the cat(s) to ACR's clinic for surgery. You will need a place to keep the trapped cats until you drop them off for their spay/neuter surgery. Covering the traps helps to keep the cats calm.

It is normal for the cat to thrash around inside the trap. It is very tempting to release him, but he will not hurt himself if the trap is covered. If a cat has already hurt himself, do not release him. Most injuries from traps are very minor, such as a bruised or bloody nose, or scratched paw pad. If you trap a severely injured or sick cat, contact ACR's office immediately, at which time you will be instructed to bring the cat to our clinic for treatment.

Make sure the trapped cat is kept in a place that is dry and warm. This can be a basement, garage, shed, mud room or bathroom. It is possible for a cat to die from hypothermia when confined in a trap outside in cold weather, so make sure he is kept in a warm area prior to taking him to the clinic. A simple guideline: If it is too cold outside for you, then it is too cold for the cat(s). Also, do not leave trapped cats in areas of excessive heat or sun. Trapped cats can quickly succumb to heat exhaustion.

## **6) BRING CAT(S) IN FOR SPAY/NEUTERING**

Again, a prior appointment must be made with ACR in order to bring a cat in to be spayed/neutered. ACR's TNR clinic is open on Thursdays and Fridays. Drop-off is any time between 7:30am – 10:00am and pick-up is the same day between 5:00pm and 6:00pm. A veterinary technician will call you when the cat(s) is out of surgery and will advise a pick up time.

Cats/Kittens must be at least two months old and weigh at least two pounds to be sterilized. All cats must be in a covered, humane trap. Plastic, newspaper or old sheets are suggested for protecting car seats and holding/recovery area.

Feral cats will be spayed/neutered, given a long-lasting anti-biotic injection and pain medication injection, receive a rabies and distemper vaccination, a topical internal parasite treatment, a topical flea treatment and will be ear-tipped. Any wounds or injuries will also be treated.

After surgery, allow the cat(s) to recover overnight in the same traps, still covered. Female cats usually need to be held for 24 – 48 hours after surgery. Male cats can be returned to the trapping site 12 – 24 hours following surgery, as long as they are fully awake and do not require further medical attention.

Make sure all cats are fully conscious and alert before releasing. Recovery space can be a basement, garage, shed, mud room or bathroom. Be sure to keep the cats in their humane traps, and do not keep them outside during recovering time where they are prey to weather and other animals.

The same evening after their surgery you may give the cat(s) a few teaspoons of food and water. Carefully open the trap to set down the food and water and to replace soiled newspaper. Repeat the next morning, and the following evening, until you release the cat(s). Do not be surprised if the cat(s) refuse to eat – that often happens because of the stress of the situation. Keep the recovery area quiet; keep the cat(s) covered; and interact with them as little as possible.

### **7) RETURN!**

Release the cat(s) in the same place you trapped him. Pull the rear door up and off, pull off the cover and then walk away. Do not be concerned if the cat hesitates a few moments before leaving. He is simply reorienting himself to his surroundings. It is not uncommon for the cat to stay away for a few days after release; he will return eventually. Keep leaving food and water out; he may eat when you are not around.

Never release the cat into a new area. Relocating cats without the proper steps can endanger the cat's life. He will try to return to his old home and may become lost or attempt to cross major roads. Also, feral-community cats form strong bonds with other cats in their colonies. Separating a cat from his colony members, and leaving him alone in a new environment, will cause stress, depression and loneliness.

### **8) MAINTAIN**

As a feral-community cat caregiver, you are responsible for the feeding/watering and sheltering of your colony and for keeping an eye on their overall health. Remain in contact with your sponsoring feral cat organization for future assistance. For more information on caring for your feral colony, please review ACR's factsheets under our [Cats and Feral Facts](#) section of our website.