

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) is the most effective and humane method to treat feral cats and manage their colonies. Cats are trapped and taken to a veterinarian to be sterilized and given any necessary medical attention. At this point friendly cats are moved to an adoption program, while those not suitable for indoor life are returned to the place of trapping. All cats are scanned for a microchip and returned to their guardian. The below information is an overview of the TNR process; for more detailed instructions, [click here](#) for a downloadable PDF.

1) **ASSESS THE SITUATION** Identify all individuals who feed community cats and all locations of feeding sites. Create a spreadsheet tracking pertinent information about the cats (i.e., number of cats, sex of each cat).

Evaluate the location as to whether it is an appropriate environment to keep the colony. The area where the cats are currently living is the best place to keep them. If relocation is necessary, refer to “Guidelines for Safely Relocating Feral Cats”.

Establish a routine feeding schedule. Feeding is best done early in the morning or later in the evening. Feed the cats at the same time and place each day for at least one week prior to trapping. Trapping should coincide with a regularly scheduled feeding.

Notify your neighbors before trapping begins to prevent them from thinking that you will harm the cats and also to allow them to keep their cats indoors. Make arrangements for kittens and cats who may be socialized after veterinary treatment, so they can be placed into an adoption program. Foster homes should be arranged prior to trapping.

2) **MAKE AN APPOINTMENT** Before you begin trapping, contact your local shelter, rescue group, or vet clinic to make an appointment. You **must** work in conjunction with a clinic; do not show up or call them saying you have a cat in trap without **first** making proper arrangements. Make sure to ask upfront what cost(s) will be incurred and what form of payments are accepted. Find a clinic near you [here](#).

3) **RENT TRAPS/PROPER EQUIPMENT** If you do not own a trap, you will need to make arrangements to rent one from the clinic providing sterilization or from another local group. If you are trapping a large colony, you may be able to rent several traps at a time, although you might want to purchase a few traps for your own use.

Other items you will need:

- one bed sheet or large towel to cover each trap
- one large blanket, bed sheet, or plastic cover to protect your vehicle seats
- newspaper to line the bottom of each trap
- an easy-open can of tuna in oil, sardines in oil, mackerel, or other enticing bait
- a spoon (or use the lid from the can to scoop out bait)
- a flashlight or headlamp for early morning or late night trapping

- tracking sheets to identify cats and record information
- a pen
- extra cat food and water for any cats remaining in the colony and not being trapped
- a pair of thick gloves
- a roll of paper towels and hand sanitizer
- a few twist ties (bread ties) to secure trap doors

4) **PREPARE THE TRAP** Place the trap on a flat surface. Unlatch the rear door and take it off so you can get your hands inside the trap. Fold several pieces of newspaper lengthwise and place them inside the bottom of the trap.

Place about one tablespoon of bait food in the rear center of the trap. Next, drizzle some liquid from the bait the entire length of the newspaper inside the trap. Place about 1/4 teaspoon of bait in the middle of the trap and 1/4 teaspoon inside the front of the trap. This strategy is meant to entice the cat into the trap, making her way to the larger amount of food at the rear of the trap. It is important not to put too much bait in the front or middle of the trap, because this may satisfy the cat and she will leave without setting off the trap.

5) **SET THE TRAP** Set up the trap at the trapping site, most likely in the feeding area. Place the trap on the ground and make certain it is stable and will not rock or tip. Cover the entire trap with a sheet or towel, leaving the opening uncovered and ensuring the cover won't interfere with the door shutting. If using multiple traps, stagger them, so they are facing in different directions. Move quietly and slowly and try to remain relaxed so your behavior won't frighten cats away.

Leave the area quietly. The cats are unlikely to enter the traps if you are standing nearby. Traps should never be left unattended under any circumstances. It is good to check the traps frequently and quietly, from a distance. Never leave a cat in a trap unattended.

Trapping feral cats may take some time. Be patient. Once a cat appears, it may take a few minutes for her to go into the trap. Make sure the trap has sprung, and the cat is securely trapped, before you approach.

Do **NOT** attempt to transfer a trapped cat to another cage or carrier. Before moving the trapped cat, ensure the trap is covered with a sheet or large towel. It is normal for the cat to thrash around inside the trap; the cat will calm down eventually. Use twist ties to ensure the rear door is secure.

6) **PLACE CAT IN HOLDING AREA** Try to trap the night before or in the morning on the day of your appointment. If you need a place to keep the trapped cat until you drop her off for surgery, make sure the cat is kept in a place that is dry and warm. This can be a basement, garage, shed, mud room, or bathroom. Do **NOT** leave a trapped cat in extreme cold or heat nor in direct sunlight.

7) **TRANSPORTING CAT TO CLINIC** Before transporting a trapped cat to the clinic, it is advised to cover your vehicle seats with a sheet, large towel, or plastic trash bag to prevent damage to your upholstery. If your vehicle has a hatchback, you can place the trapped cat in the rear as long as she will receive proper ventilation; do **NOT** transport a trapped cat in the trunk. Ensure the trap is securely situated in the car, so it will not tip over or fall off a seat while you are driving. Keep the trap covered with a sheet or towel.

8) **AT THE CLINIC** All cats must remain in a trap, covered with a sheet or towel. When dropping the cat off at the clinic, remind your vet the cat is there to be TNR'd — that you will be releasing the cat in 12 to 24 hours — so dissolvable sutures and surgical glue are used. The cat should also be vaccinated and ear-tipped. Additionally, make sure your vet applies a topical internal parasite (worm) treatment and a topical flea/tick treatment. Make your vet aware of any wounds or injuries so those can be treated.

9) **POSTOPERATIVE CARE** After surgery, allow the cat to recover overnight in the covered trap. 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.

The same evening after surgery you may give the cat a few teaspoons of food and water and replace soiled newspaper, if necessary. Repeat the next morning and the following evening, until you release the cat. Do not be surprised if the cat refuses to eat, that often happens because of the stress of the situation. Keep the recovery area quiet; keep the cat covered; and interact with her as little as possible.

7) **RETURN** Release the cat in the same place you trapped her. 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. She is simply reorienting herself to her surroundings. It is not uncommon for the cat to stay away for a few days after release; she will return eventually. Keep leaving food and water out; she 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.

8) **MAINTAIN** After the cat has been returned to her outdoor home, continue to provide regular food and water for her. It is also recommended that you provide a simple shelter, especially during winter months, to protect her from the elements. If she should

become injured or sick, depending on the severity of the condition, she should be retrapped and vetted. Maintain proper health records for her, and it is advised to remain in contact with the vet clinic who spayed her, should you need future assistance.