



Trapping Ferals for Spay/Neuter Surgery and Vaccinations

Most feral cats are too “wild” to pick up and put in a carrier for transport to a veterinarian or clinic for spay/neuter, vaccinations or other care; therefore, trapping is required. There are several steps necessary for a successful trapping project and you should ensure you are well informed and prepared before you begin a project.

Study the colony you’ll be trapping. Some things to look for include:

- How many cats are there?
- Are there kittens?
- What condition are the cats in?
- Are any of the cats nursing?
- Could any of the cats belong to nearby residents?

It’s necessary to familiarize yourself with the population of cats so you can lay out a plan on how to ensure you trap all of the cats and are able to meet all of their needs. Also, make sure you have permission from the property owner before you start and that you’re meeting the laws in your particular municipality.

Make arrangements to borrow traps from Operation Cat Snip or your municipality.
Call ahead to make sure the number of traps required will be available.

The number of traps you’ll need depends on several things:

- The number of cats in your colony.
- The number of cats your vet or clinic can take.
- The number of cats you can reasonably transport.

Make appointments with the veterinarian or clinic you’ll use. If you’re working with Operation Cat Snip, you’ll be using the Spay/Neuter clinic in Gloucester (<http://www.arfva.org/>). Operation Cat Snip will pay for all costs for initial spay/neuter surgeries and vaccinations unless otherwise notified. Currently, the Gloucester clinic is open on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday **and appointments must be made in**

advance; therefore, you can only trap Sunday through Tuesday. When you first start trapping, your success rate will be greatest since the cats have no negative experiences associated with the traps, so you may be able to reasonably predict how many cats you'll take in. Also, make sure you realize that your cats will remain in the traps for transport to and from the vet/clinic. This may limit the number of traps you'll have available, which will affect how many cats to make your reservations for. **Also, if surgery is scheduled for Wednesday, plan to have a safe, quiet location for the cats to recuperate overnight. Releasing the cats on Thursday is recommended.**

If you're working on a colony outside of the Operation Cat Snip base, you'll need to find a vet that accepts ferals. Inform them that your cats are feral and will be part of a managed colony. Also, make sure they understand you cannot insure how many cats you will bring in since the number of cats you're able to trap is not known. **Please note - Operation Cat Snip cannot cover the cost of the surgery from area vets.**

Withhold food before you trap. It's very important that your cats are hungry so you can increase the chances that they'll go into the traps. Also, following a regular feeding schedule for several weeks before you trap can improve your chances. Withhold food for 24 hours before putting out your traps. We recommend 9-Lives **Flakes** of Tuna for bait. Placing a small amount on a plastic lid from a food container is preferable, or a small Styrofoam bowl or plate. Do not use the cat can as the container because of the risk that a trapped cat may cut itself since some amount of thrashing around can be expected.

Put out your traps. Although it's not always possible, the best thing for your cats is to monitor the traps from a discreet location so you can respond immediately when a cat enters and trips the trap. **Once the traps are set, place a cover over the trap. The cover will help calm the trapped cat before, during and after trapping - this will prevent other cats from becoming too suspicious of the other traps.** If you can't stay around to monitor your traps, make sure the traps are in a discreet location that will ensure that passersby do not interfere with your plan or harm cats that are trapped. Separating the traps so they're not within line of site of other traps is also recommended. Also, make sure the weather forecast is safe for the cats. Rain could flood the area so make sure the traps will not be standing in water. This is especially important during cold weather, when hypothermia is possible. Do not trap in extreme heat since trapped cats will be stressed, which can increase the risk of heat stress illnesses.

A holding area may be necessary. If you stay around during the trapping session, you may need to move your cats to a holding area until it's time to transport them to the vet or clinic. The area should be dry, quiet and a reasonable temperature. Keep the covers over the traps unless it's hot, when you'll need to raise the covers to allow for some ventilation. Do not put food or water in the traps for the cats if they'll be going to the

clinic within 12 hours. If you'll be holding the cats for longer than that, you may put food and water inside the trap but be very careful so that the cat does not escape. **A trap fork is recommended to prevent the cat from escape.**

Transport cats in cages to the vet or clinic. Do not attempt to move your cats from cages to carriers. Discuss pick up times and recommendations on how much time is needed before you can return the cats to the area where they were trapped for release. You may need to hold the cats for several hours after pick up so ensure you have a holding area available. Release the cats in the exact location where they were trapped.

Following is a link to more trapping information provided by Alley Cat Allies:

<http://www.alleycat.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=330>