



Community Cat Trapping 101

Need to rent a humane trap? Please send us an email communitycats@sfspca.org or call (415) 554-3084 to check on availability to rent one of ours. Trap rentals require a refundable deposit (credit card preferred) for a two-week rental (see website or call for current fee). Your deposit will be refunded once you have returned the trap, provided it is returned clean and in good, working condition.

BEFORE YOU TRAP

- Familiarize yourself with the Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) process and plan your trapping day in advance.
- Coordinate with caregiver/s who may be feeding the cats, prepare the cats for trapping by feeding on a schedule and in a designated feeding area (feed at the same place and time each day).
- Determine how many traps you will need and how many spay/neuter appointments you will need to schedule after assessing the colony.
- Determine a safe, temperature-controlled location where you will be able to hold the cats before and after surgery while they recover, such as a bathroom, garage, or basement. Do not leave cats outside ever.
- Gather and prepare all of the appropriate equipment and understand how it all works ahead of time—and practice. It is important to test all traps before trapping to ensure they are functioning.
- **Schedule your spay/neuter appointment BEFORE trapping.**
- Withhold food 24 hours before trapping. The cat is more likely to enter the trap quickly if it's hungry. For a particularly wary cat, you might not want to feed it for two days prior to trapping.
 - If other people are feeding cats in the area, ask them not to leave out food the day or two before you trap.

TRAPPING

- We recommend trapping the day before or the morning of your scheduled surgery appointment.
- It is important that the cats do not remain in their traps for longer than needed. The longer they are in the trap, the more stressed and dehydrated they become, which can be dangerous for surgery.
- **On the day of:**
 - Prepare the traps by lining the bottom with newspaper, or a potty pad.
 - Bait the trap with wet/canned cat food, tuna, or sardines. Place the food in a paper dish at the back of the trap behind the trigger plate. (do not leave the food in an open can).
 - Cover the set trap with a towel, not blocking or touching the door.
- Set the traps in the area that the cats usually eat or hang out. Be sure your traps are set correctly.
- Set the trap at the cat's normal feeding time.
- Set the traps and watch them from afar—at least 30 feet away or hidden out of sight/sitting in your car.
- **DO NOT LEAVE TRAPS UNATTENDED.**
 - Traps should not be left unattended and never left out overnight.
 - Weather is also a factor, and it is not good to have a cat trapped out in the rain, sun, etc.

ONCE THE CAT IS TRAPPED

- **Keep the cat in the trap at all times.** Once trapped, the cat will remain in their trap throughout the entire TNR process. Do not attempt to open the trap to feed or check on them.
- Once trapped, a cat may panic. Immediately after the trap has shut, pull the cover over the entire trap, ensuring that all four sides are covered. After a short time, the cat will calm down.
- Check the trap doors and be sure the trap is secure.
 - Use zip ties to secure any areas that you feel might not be secure.
- After the cat has gone into the trap and is caught, take the covered trap and secure it in your holding area or vehicle.
 - If you're holding the cat overnight, immediately move the trap with the cat to a quiet, dark location.
- Place the trap on top of a towel, newspaper, or potty pad to absorb any urine.
- When transporting the cat to the spay/neuter clinic, be sure to place a towel, tarp, or potty pads under the trap to protect your car.

HAVING DIFFICULTY TRAPPING? TRAP TRAINING MIGHT HELP

"Trap training" is training the cat to go in and out of the trap without fear. This can be done with a one-door or two-door trap, by securing the trap open and unable to trip the plate. Some traps have control door that you can remove or you may have to tie the trap door open to accomplish this.

- Establish a feeding time and location with the cat that they can rely on daily.
- Leave a trap unset near their regular feeding location. Be sure the trap is covered like it will be on the day you set it. This will allow the animal to get used to seeing and smelling the trap.
- Remove the trap after each feeding.

- After a day or two, start putting food in the unset trap. Each day, put the food a little further in, until the cat is comfortable eating in the trap.
- On trapping day, set the trap with the food all the way at the back so the cat will have to walk far enough in to trip the trip-plate that springs the door shut.

TRANSPORTING TRAPPED CATS

- Never move trapped cats in the open bed of a pickup truck.
- If traps must be stacked inside the vehicle, be sure to secure the traps with bungee cords or other restraints and place towels, newspaper, or potty pads between the stacked traps. If an unsecured trap tips sideways or upside down, it can open and release the cat. Use your best judgment when stacking.

TRAPPING KITTENS

- It is best to use a kitten-size trap.
- If you are trying to catch a mother cat and her kittens, first catch the kittens and place them in a plastic pet carrier. Then set a trap and place the carrier with the kittens behind the trap, with the door of the facing the back of the trap. Cover the end of the trap and the entire carrier with a sheet or towel.
- Food and the sound of the kittens crying will lure mom into the trap.

Remember, with proper planning, your TNR project can be successfully implemented. Trapping might feel awkward at first, and you might need to trap a few times before you feel at ease.

Call or email us with questions: (415) 554-3084, communitycats@sfspca.org

Every time you assist in neutering a cat, you will have helped more cats live safe and healthy lives without increasing the feral cat population.