



Post-Surgery Recovery Care

When you pick up a community cat after spay/neuter surgery, we will discharge the cat to you in the trap in which it arrived. The cat will be fully awake but might not be fully alert. Plan to keep the cat in the trap during recovery. We will provide a record of care given, including verification of spay-neuter, vaccinations, microchip, and any additional services.

After surgery, allow the cat to recover overnight. There might be a few drops of blood on the paper in the bottom of the cage. This is normal. When you get home, place the covered trap in the recovery area and leave the cat alone for a little while.

Keep the cats indoors in their covered traps and ensure they are dry, in a temperature-controlled environment, and away from loud noises or dangers such as toxic fumes, other animals, or people (examples: garage, bathroom, basement, etc.). When cats are recovering from anesthesia, they're unable to regulate their body temperature. It is important to keep them from getting too hot or cold. If you feel you cannot provide appropriate recovery accommodation, let the Community Cats Program know; we may be able to assist.

Keep cats until they recover. Most cats can be re-released the day after surgery, depending on recovery speed. Before release, be sure cats are fully conscious, clear-eyed, alert, and there are no signs of infection (discharge, bleeding, or swelling). If a cat seems lethargic beyond the first day, or if you notice any of the above signs, please give us a call.

*Lactating (nursing) mothers can be released immediately to rejoin their kittens as soon as possible.

Preparing the holding area ahead of time. The area should be quiet, sheltered, dry, temperature-controlled, and off-limits to other animals (examples: garage, bathroom, basement, etc.). Place a plastic tarp, towel, potty pads, and/or multiple layers of newspaper underneath the trap to absorb urine.

Keep traps covered to reduce the cats' stress. Never open trap doors or allow cats out of the trap. Do not stick your fingers through the bars or attempt to handle the cats.

Feed the cat once or twice during the holding period.

In the evening after surgery, the medical team will have given every cat a meal inside their trap. The dish can be refilled with wet food from outside the trap through the bars. If necessary, dishes can be moved around with blunt sticks. Do not use anything sharp that could injure the cat. Do not open the trap.

Note: The cat might not urinate or defecate during the first day or two of recovery. This is normal. It is a good sign if they have eaten, however, because this is a stressful situation for the cat, they might not eat.

Return the cats. Release cats in the same place they were trapped. Open the front door of the trap and pull back the cover. Or, if the trap has a rear door, pull the cover away from the back door, pull that door up and off, remove the cover, and walk away. Don't be concerned if a cat hesitates a few moments before leaving. It is simply reorienting itself. Sometimes a cat "disappears" for a few days after it is returned. It will reappear eventually. Advise the caretaker that they can resume the feeding schedule and continue to provide food and water.

Thoroughly clean the traps. Whether traps are borrowed or your own, they should be cleaned with a non-toxic disinfectant before being stored. Even traps that appear clean must be disinfected because the scent of the previous cat can deter other cats from entering a trap.