

Tips for Trapping Feral Cats

Preparation for Trapping

- Feed the cats every day, if possible at the same time. Never feed tuna fish or similar special treats, as this will be used later for bait in the trapping process.

Items needed for trapping

- Platform operated humane trap
- Towel or folded newspaper to cover the trap floor
- Blanket or sheet large enough to cover the entire trap
- Plastic lid or small paper plate to hold the bait
- Tuna fish, sardines, or fried chicken (type intended for human consumption, not cat food)
- Can opener and spoon or fork
- Regular food and water for feeding the remainder of the colony after the trapping session

Trapping

1. Arrange veterinary care for the cats before you start trapping. In Reno Community Cats will spay or neuter feral cats each Wednesday and Friday morning. If other arrangements are needed call the Nevada Humane Society Animal Help Desk at 775-856-2000 ext 200.
2. It is best to plan your trapping sessions with a partner. An extra pair of hands will most always be needed. Never go alone to remote or urban trapping sites.
3. Do not do the regular feeding. Planning your trapping session at, or shortly after, the regular feeding time is often effective. Some hunger will make the bait more attractive.
4. Put a towel or folded newspapers on the floor of the trap to cover the platform (release mechanism) and the mesh floor of the trap.
5. Place the bait on the plastic lid or paper plate and place it at the end furthest from the trap entry, beyond the platform release mechanism. Be sure that the food will not interfere with the release mechanism. Make a trail of small mounds of the bait that lead into the trap. (You can drop bits of the bait food through the mesh top of the trap onto the floor below.)
6. Set the trap and wait. Do not leave visual range, but watch at a distance that is not disturbing to the cats. Never leave a trap unattended. (Sitting in a car nearby works well.)
7. Covering all but the door opening to the trap often gives the best results, (make sure that the cover will not obstruct the door closing). If the cats remain nervous and will not enter the trap you may try uncovering the back end, or leaving the entire trap uncovered.
8. As soon as the cat is trapped, quickly cover the entire trap with the blanket or sheet to calm and quiet the animal.
9. It is usually best to bring the cat to the clinic in the trap. Most vets prefer that the cat be delivered in the trap or a squeeze carrier as the wire mesh makes it

easier for them to safely administer a tranquilizing injection to the cat. A plastic cat carrier makes it more difficult for the vet and more stressful for the cat.

10. Keep the trap or carrier covered during transit and take care not to tip the trap or to allow it to be overturned as the door may come open. The door may be secured shut with a twist tie or short length of string.
11. Don't forget to feed the other animals before you leave the site with the trapped animals.
12. Keep a record of the cats that you trap. If it is possible to take a photo of each cat this is ideal. In any case you will want to record the description, sex, approximate age, dates of trapping and vaccinations for each cat. We recommend using the Alley Cat Allies Colony Tracking System form.

Release

Cat should be kept warm for 12 hours after their surgery.

In good weather most males and females can be released the following day. Feral cats experience stress while in captivity they should not be held longer than necessary.

In extremely cold weather or if there have been any surgical complications they may need to be kept for an additional day before release.

Why You Should Never Leave a Trap Unattended

It is best to wait just out of view, inside a car often works well, especially if the car can be positioned so that you can see the traps. If that is not possible listen for the sound of the traps closing just out of visual range and check them every 10 minutes at the most.

Cats in unattended traps can be:

- Injure themselves trying to escape from the trap
- Attacked, injured, or traumatized by dogs, raccoons, and other animals who may be drawn to the smell of the food
- Hurt by cruel humans
- Traps can be stolen or smashed
- Released, making it much more difficult to re-trap the now trap-shy cat

All of these things have actually been experienced by cat trappers.

What to Do If the Cat Won't Go Into the Trap

Be sure that you have:

- Covered the mesh floor of the trap.
- Put a trail of small bits of bait leading into the trap.

Other things to try:

- Vary the way that you are covering the trap. Most cats prefer the trap to be covered, but some will only go in if they can see out the far end -- try uncovering the far end only. A few cats prefer the trap to be uncovered, but

you'll want to be near by to cover the trap as soon as they are trapped, to calm the cat.

- Wait two hours past the regular feeding time.
- Try different bait; sardines, tuna fish in oil, deli turkey, or fast-food fried chicken are favorites.
- Wash the trap with a scrub brush and soap and water, rinse completely and air dry. If the cat can smell another cat they may avoid the trap. If a cat has urinated in the trap or sprayed on the trap, spray the trap with a mild bleach and water solution (this will neutralize the urine), then rinse it thoroughly to remove all bleach and allow it to air dry.
- Try using a larger size trap, some cats, particularly larger cats, may be reluctant to go into the regular cat-sized traps. Try a raccoon size model.

If these tips fail:

- Tie the trap door open so that it cannot close and feed the cat a short distance from the trap. Move the food closer each day. In the course of a few days you should be able to put the food inside the trap, and finally all the way at the back of the trap. Once the cat is comfortably eating in the trap you can set it and catch him.
- Some cats will only go into a wooden drop (or pull) trap. Contact us for instructions on how to construct such a trap or where to borrow one.

Trapping a Group of Kittens

To get multiple kittens at once or a mom with kittens, you can use a conventional trap like a pull trap (you will need a large or raccoon-size trap):

- Bait the trap as usual, the only difference is that you may want to use a bit more food, as you are trying to capture multiple animals at once.
- Tie a length of sturdy twine to a stick that is the appropriate height to prop the trap door open. The twine must be long enough for you to operate the trap from a distance, preferably from inside of a car where your presence is least likely to frighten the cats.
- Watch until several kittens are all inside and pull the twine to close the door.
- It's worthwhile to do a test run to see that you have the stick positioned in such a way that the trap will close properly.