

CARING for CATS Held in TRAPS

During the trapping period and following surgery, the cats will be kept in their traps. *They should never be let out except while at the vet and when they're being returned to their colony.* We have encountered resistance at times from well-meaning people, including animal welfare professionals, who believe it's cruel to leave a cat in a trap for more than 48 hours. Our experience is quite the contrary. Feral cats don't react like a tame cat might. Whether they're in a large cage or a trap, ferals tend to remain still and in one place. They prefer to be in tighter, darker spaces rather than wide open enclosures - apparently, they feel more secure. As long as the trap is kept *covered with a sheet* and long enough (we recommend 36 inches) for them to huddle at one end and eat at the other, they will be perfectly fine. *READ vet instructions on how long to keep the cat for recovery.*

Materials needed

- Traps large enough to double as cages (preferably 36" long) and with rear doors (a must!)
- Newspaper to line inside the trap since there will be no litter box
- Water dishes, small with flat bottoms (plastic or paper throw-aways)
- Food dishes, small (plastic or paper throw-aways)
- Cotton sheets (for trap covers - thin to allow air flow especially in summer)
- Towels, small
- Plastic ground cloth or tarp
- Quiet, safe place to recover cats out of bad weather

Preparing the holding space

Spread the plastic ground cloth or tarp on the ground. This will protect any urine or other waste from getting on the floor. If you have tables, put them on the ground cloth - using tables to rest the traps on makes it easier to clean and feed, as opposed to having to bend down to the floor. If you use tables, cover them with plastic (NOT the traps). Place the traps several inches apart either on the ground or on the table, each one covered with a sheet. Have the rear and front doors of all the traps facing the same way.

The holding space itself should be secure, dry and quiet with air circulation.

(NOTE: In the hours after surgery, a cat's body temperature will drop, so the recovery space during this time MUST be warm. Do not place post-surgery cats in a cold room.)

Feeding and cleaning

1. Don't worry if the cat has no food or water if you are taking it to surgery the next morning. Chances are they won't eat or drink anyway, being too scared. The next day you can get the cat to move from one end of the trap to the other usually by uncovering the sheet on the end you want to work on. The cat will seek cover at the other end. Occasionally, you might have to poke him or give the trap a little shake to get him to move. Use great caution with eyes on the cat at all times. Have one hand on the trap door to close immediately if the cats wants to escape. Usually not the case, but always be prepared. If you need to use something to put food/water in and out of the trap try long tongs or the thing to pick up items off the floor.

(continued)

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2. While the cat's isolated on one end, line the bottom of the trap on the other end with newspaper. This will serve as "litter." If you try to use regular litter in a pan, the cat will just trash it and create even more of a mess. At the rear door end of the trap, put in the food and water in their dishes. (NOTE: NO FOOD OR WATER AFTER 10 PM THE NIGHT BEFORE SURGERY, unless you're dealing with kittens in which case consult your veterinarian for the cut-off time.)



3. Go to the other end of the trap and isolate the cat against the end you just worked on. Again, line the bottom with newspaper and, if you're at the trap door end, put in the small towel. The cats like lying on it, especially when it's up against the slanted trap door. If possible, work on the trap door end first and the rear door side last. That way, there's no chance the cat will end up sitting in the food and water after you've just put it in.

4. Ideally, repeat this process twice a day. This will keep the traps relatively clean and the cats calm. Don't try to be perfect - the space will probably end up smelling, but when the cats are released, you just roll up all the plastic, throw it away and the smell will dissipate. While the cats are being neutered, you can replace the ground cloth with a fresh one.

Source: <http://www.neighborhoodcats.org>

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