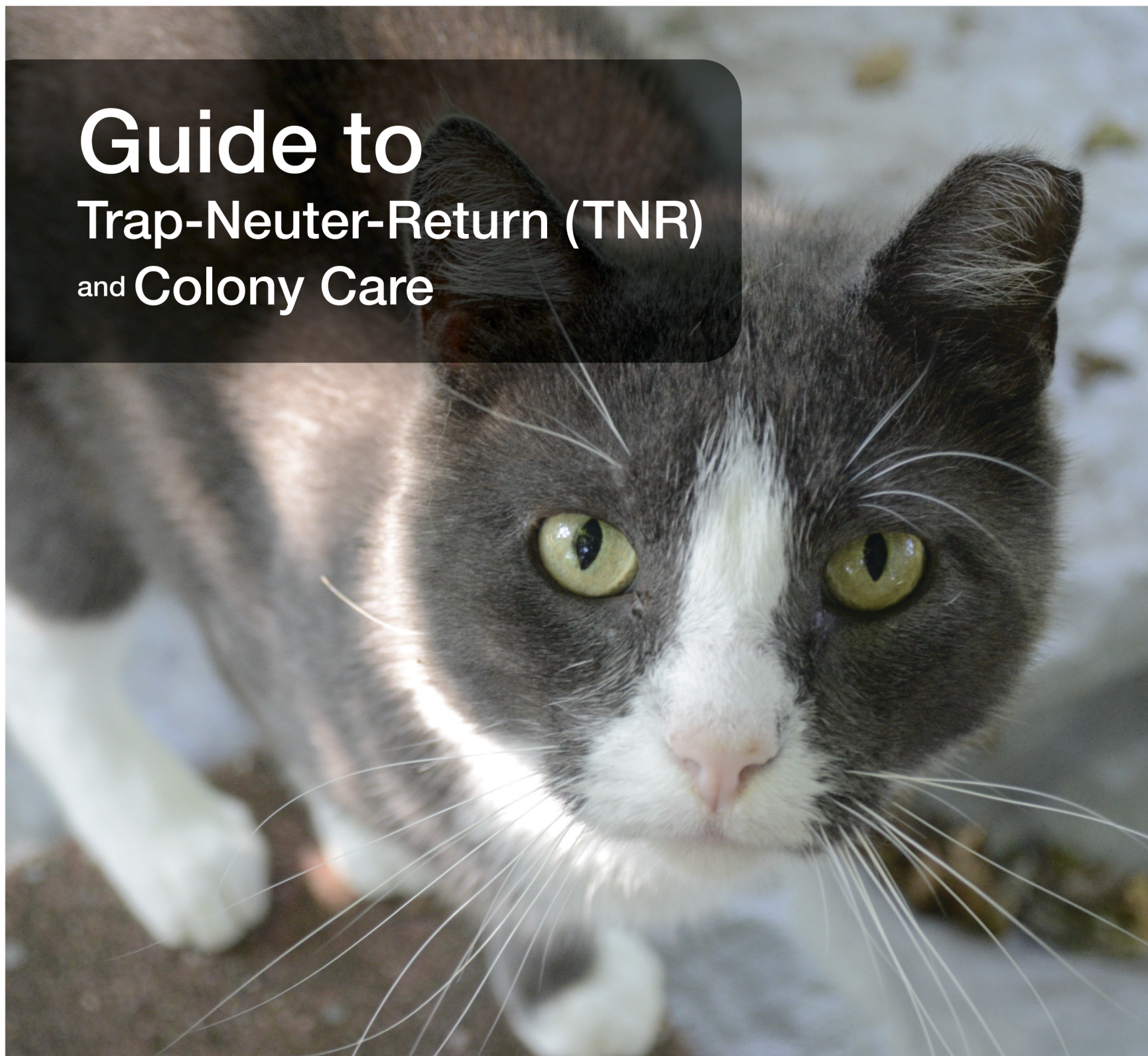




Guide to Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) and Colony Care



Contents

- Before You Trap – p. 3
- Trapping – p. 9
- In-Trap Care – p. 14
- Post-Surgery – p. 17
- Working with a Veterinarian – p. 21
- Trapping Equipment – p. 24
- Colony Care – Best Practices – p. 28
- Community Relations – p. 43
- Poison and Other Threats to Cats – p. 47
- Is That Cat Feral? – p. 49
- Selective Trapping and Trap-Shy Cats – p. 54
- Kitten Guide – p. 58
- Trapping Kittens and Moms – p. 69
- Kitten Socialization – p. 75
- Guidelines for Safe Relocation of Cats – p. 79
- Resources – p. 82

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Fourth printing

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) is the only humane approach to the management of feral and stray cats, collectively known as community cats. These free-roaming cats are trapped, sterilized, vaccinated, eartipped, and returned to their colony of origin. This practice halts reproduction and many of the nuisance behaviors associated with unneutered cats such as yowling, fighting, and marking territory.

Box traps are the tools of choice – they make the whole experience safe for both cats and humans. In TNR, cats stay in the traps before and after surgery, right up until they are released, so there is no need for caregivers to handle them.

Before You Trap

1. Read the step-by-step instructions in this guide. Understanding the process thoroughly before you trap is essential. Being prepared helps you anticipate potential problems and plan solutions ahead of time.

2. Keep in mind that TNR is most effective if you employ targeted or mass trapping. This is the trapping of whole colonies in a single geographical area or a single neighborhood to allow for complete population control. Benefits of mass trapping include:

- Makes most efficient use of volunteer time and resources.
- Creates quicker results than staggered trapping of a colony over months or even years.
- Lends credibility to your humane approach to colony management – by keeping medical records and tracking your colony's population decline after TNR, you'll have persuasive evidence that TNR works.

3. Find out if there is a TNR program in your area. If an organization or some individuals have already done or are doing TNR nearby, they might be able to assist you with equipment, trapping, and/or advice on finding a feral-friendly, affordable veterinarian or clinic. Try calling Animal Control, local rescue groups, and your local veterinarian, or do an online search to find out.

4. Count and assess the cats. It is important that you get to know the colony, the number of cats, and their descriptions to ensure that all of the cats have been trapped. While feeding, start a log of each cat and kitten you see. This will help you monitor the number of cats and their health, determine their approximate age, and help you determine the numbers of appointments and traps you will need. Taking photographs of each cat will help you catalogue each cat, especially if they look alike.

It will also help you identify if some cats are stray—friendly to humans—and may be candidates for adoption into homes or if you will need to be prepared for trapping and fostering kittens. (For more information, see the **Is That Cat Feral?** and **Kitten Socialization** sections of this book.) This is also important for ongoing colony care so you will know if any cats are missing or if any new cats join the colony who need to be neutered. You can use the Alley Cat Allies tracking sheet (see **Resources** at the end of this book) to document each cat in the colony and learn more about keeping good records in the **Colony Care – Best Practices** section of this book.

While you are assessing the colony, you will also have to consider their specific circumstances and safety. We do not recommend relocation; it should be done only under extreme circumstances when the cats' lives are in imminent danger. Successful relocation of feral cats is logistically complicated and there is no guarantee that the cats will accept and remain in the new location. The best way to protect the cats is to ensure they are spayed, neutered, vaccinated, and eartipped; then consider other plans that may be necessary, such as relocation. Be fully prepared before you decide to trap and move cats by reading the **Guidelines for Safe Relocation of Feral Cats** section of this book. A common reason why caregivers feel they need to relocate a colony is poisoning threats. A later chapter discusses how to deal with **Poison and Other Threats to Cats**.

5. Find and coordinate with a feral-friendly veterinarian or clinic. Line up spay/neuter appointments before you trap. You don't want to successfully trap cats and then have nowhere to take them. Make appointments for the number of traps you have, though you may not catch a cat in every trap. Find out if the clinic or veterinary practice is familiar with trapping and make sure they understand that the scheduled appointments may not be filled completely despite your best efforts to trap all the cats you have targeted. Ask them what number of cats they can spay, neuter, vaccinate, and eartip in a single day. In addition to sterilizing the cats, it is important that they be vaccinated against rabies. Be sure to verify the duration of the rabies vaccine the clinic administers (1 year or 3 years). Make sure the veterinarian will tip the left ears of the cats, as this is the most visible and most universally recognized signifier that a free-roaming cat has been spayed or neutered. Plan your trapping session so that the cats are transported to the veterinarian's office or clinic as soon as possible to keep cats' time in the traps at a minimum.

Important: Find a veterinary practice or low-cost clinic familiar with or willing to learn how to work with feral cats. Your local rescue groups may be able to help, or you can consult the Alley Cat Allies website (alleycat.org) for Feral Friends in your area. If the veterinarian you ultimately choose has no experience with feral cats, he or she can learn more about treating feral cats. For more information, see the **Working with a Veterinarian** section of this book.

6. Identify and set up your holding/recovery area. Choose a dry, temperature-controlled (about 70 degrees), and safe holding/recovery area for use before and after

the cats' surgeries. Some examples of acceptable locations include basements, garages, or your local spay-neuter clinic. A bathroom, or possibly your veterinarian's office, might be used for a small number of cats. Make sure it is quiet and inaccessible to other animals. Ensure that all entries in and out (doors, windows, ceiling tiles, etc.) are closed at all times in the event that a cat should escape from his trap. Using double-door traps and trap dividers minimizes the risk of any cat escaping. Caring for a cat in a single-door trap carries a much greater risk of escape and precludes thorough cleaning, making it more stressful for the cat.

7. Gather all of the appropriate equipment. You will need to obtain one or more box traps designed for cats. When trapping a colony, you must have at least one trap per cat. We suggest having more traps than cats, because you never know which locations will be most attractive to the cats or if a trap will malfunction. The most commonly used traps are Tomahawk and Tru Catch box traps; we recommend models that have both front and back doors and are 36" long by 12" high, since the cats will be spending both pre-surgery holding and post-surgery recovery time in the trap. Two-door traps of the right height also make caring for the cats safer and easier.

Other essentials include bait (usually canned fish), trap covers, and newspaper. See the **Trapping Equipment** section of this book for a full list of recommended supplies and a list of companies that make and/or sell traps.

8. Pay attention to the weather. If inclement or extreme weather is a possibility, plan for an extra trapping day to ensure you will get all the cats in time for your surgery appointment. Never trap in extreme temperatures, hot or cold. They are dangerous conditions for cats to be in without food and exposed to the elements. Also, note that cats often stay hidden while it is raining or after a heavy snowfall.

However, though not ideal, doing a TNR project in winter does not necessarily put the cats at risk for hypothermia if they have sufficient warm winter shelters to return to after they are released.

9. Find and coordinate with the other caregivers about your plans to trap. Withholding food before trapping and leaving traps undisturbed during trapping is essential to your success, so you need to ensure cooperation from everyone involved with the colony. If you are the primary caregiver, this is a good opportunity to educate the community and let them know you are caring for the cats. If there are other people feeding the cats, talk to them about Trap-Neuter-Return and try to coordinate efforts, particularly when it comes to feeding, withholding food before trapping, and assessing the colony. Flyers and handouts, including door hangers, can help explain what you are doing and why. You can find examples in the **Resources** section at the end of this book. Networking with the community can underscore the legitimacy of the project and might identify potential caretakers or donors to support the lifelong care of the colony.

If some colony feeders refuse to cooperate, make sure the bait used in the TNR project is more tempting to the cats than the current food.

10. Communicate with neighbors around the colony. Open communication and education are important parts of conducting Trap-Neuter-Return and are essential to a colony's sustainability going forward. Many people are not aware that feral cats live and thrive outdoors and that neutering improves their lives—and they may have concerns about the cats that can be easily addressed. You can prevent potential situations from escalating and avoid endangering the cats by introducing yourself as the person to contact if someone has questions or concerns. Learn more about helping cats and people coexist in the **Community Relations** section of this book.

11. Be Prepared for these Special Scenarios

» **Kittens and/or Nursing Mothers:** You may come across kittens and/or nursing mothers in your trapping efforts. There are many factors for you to take into account before you decide what your plan of action will be, including the presence of the mother, the kittens' age, and your own resources. A cat can be spayed and still nurse, but newborn kittens cannot survive without their mother for very long, so you may or may not want to include nursing cats in your TNR plan. Learn more in the **Kitten Guide** later in this book, which includes information on how to tell whether a cat is nursing and how to trap a mom and her kittens.

Recommended: Leave nursing kittens in place with their mothers in the colony, and trap the mother and kittens after they are weaned. Using the bottle-and-string or drop trap methods explained in the section on **Selective Trapping and Trap-Shy Cats**, you can exclude a lactating mother from your trapping program. After the kittens are weaned, you can use the same method to trap the mom and get her spayed.

Kittens 8 weeks old or younger are generally young enough to be socialized in a short period of time and put up for adoption. Removing and taming the youngest kittens for adoption when a TNR project is just getting underway, or is still incomplete, can be a good strategy to benefit all concerned. Where TNR has been neglected for too long, the large number of cats in the area is often a major complaint of those residents intolerant of the cats. If the litters of young kittens can be removed from a colony, community relations are often improved with such a visible reduction in the number of cats. Also, the life-long cost of feeding the colony will be reduced, allowing for a better quality of ongoing care.

If you decide to include kittens and/or the nursing mother in Trap-Neuter-Return, it is important to use the proper traps (see **Trapping Equipment**) to ensure their safety. Also, be sure to follow the protocols in the **Post-Surgery** section of this book.

Always put kitten safety first when trapping by using the correct traps. You should

have one trap per cat so that the kittens are less likely to follow each other into a single trap. Kitten traps exist, but full-size traps can be tripped by kittens as light as one pound. When trapping multiple kittens, always manually spring the box traps with the bottle-and-string method (explained in the section on **Selective Trapping and Trap-Shy Cats**) to ensure that no kittens are by the trap door when it's triggered.

► **Ill or Injured Cats:** Plan ahead to ensure you can provide immediate care to, and make decisions about, an ill or injured cat. Have the phone number on hand of a veterinarian who works with feral cats—and whose practice will be open while you are trapping. Building up an emergency fund to help cover unexpected expenses could come in handy here. If you decide to have an ill or injured cat treated, you may also have to make your own arrangements for the cat's recovery indoors if the veterinary facility cannot hold the cat. If the cat is feral, you must take care to provide a low-stress recovery environment. See the **Colony Care – Best Practices** section for instructions on how to set up a recovery cage for a feral cat.

► **Friendly Cats:** Have a plan in place for how to help friendly cats (socialized to humans). Decide in advance whether you will try to find homes or will eartip and return socialized cats even if you hope to later bring them in off the street. Eartipping doesn't negatively impact a cat's adoptability. Alley Cat Allies has useful tips on finding homes for socialized cats at alleycat.org/FindingaHome.

12. Feed on a schedule at least two weeks prior to trapping. To get the cats used to coming out and eating while you are there (and help with your assessment process), establish a set time and place to feed the cats every day. The cats will quickly adapt to the feeding time and will come at that time each day. **This is essential to making sure that they all come to eat when you plan to trap.**

13. Withhold food for at least 24 hours prior to trapping. Make sure that all the feeders know which day to withhold food, even if they only feed occasionally. Withholding food before trapping helps ensure that the cats' hunger will overcome their fear of the unfamiliar traps.

Tip: Feed out of unset traps for one to two weeks prior to the trapping day, to get cats used to seeing and walking into them. Rig the trap so the trapdoor stays open. Remove traps after the cats eat if there is risk of theft, damage, or a cat accidentally being trapped. With this method, you can continue to feed up to the day you begin trapping because the cats have learned to be unafraid of entering the traps.

Learn more about feeding and colony care in the **Colony Care – Best Practices** section.

14. Ensure that the feeding station is appropriately placed. If the usual feeding station is placed in an area that is free of human traffic and is inconspicuous, you will have greater

success in getting them to show up for trapping. If not, you may need to set the traps in more discreet areas where the cats will more readily approach them.

15. Confirm the right transportation. If the clinic you are using offers transportation service, you can reserve that at the time you make the spay/neuter appointments. If using private transportation, be sure the vehicle comfortably fits all the traps inside its climate-controlled area.

16. Although it may not be necessary, consider securing help for trapping, either through recruiting volunteers or asking a friend. Trapping by yourself, especially for your first time, can be overwhelming and exhausting. Having a companion is also a good safety precaution if you are trapping at night or in an unfamiliar area. Be sure to brief your helpers on proper trapping procedure beforehand, so there will be as little talking as possible during the actual trapping.

17. Practice setting traps ahead of time. If you have never set a trap, doing it near the trap site on the day-of is not the best place to learn. Be as comfortable as possible with your equipment, for your own peace of mind and the cats' safety. Testing the traps ahead of time will also save you the frustration of seeing a cat walk in and out of a trap that fails to close. Alley Cat Allies has demonstrations of setting a Tru Catch trap and setting a Tomahawk trap at alleycat.org/Traps.

18. Monitor and label the traps. Never leave your traps unattended. This will prevent theft and will ensure that you are ready to cover the traps as cats are caught. To satisfy neighbors' curiosity, attach a label with your name, phone number, and information on what you are doing, for example: *Humane trapping for veterinary care in progress, cats will not be harmed and should not be touched*. If you are trapping in multiple locations, also label each trap with the location to ensure the cats will be returned to the right colony. Waterproof the sign by enclosing it in a plastic covering or zippered sandwich bag.

19. Make a written plan for the whole process. Make sure your written plan includes every tool you need and step you must complete throughout the Trap-Neuter-Return process. Remember that many tasks must be completed before trapping can start. You must procure traps and other equipment, and arrange for veterinary services, transportation, and a safe, indoor recovery space.

Trapping

1. Set up and prepare for trapping. Do all of your setup and preparation away from the colony site—remember, feral cats are generally fearful of people. Trapping will also go more smoothly if you don't disrupt the cats' feeding area during preparation. Throughout the entire trapping process, clinic stay, recovery, and return, you should make the environment around the cats as calm and quiet as possible. This will help minimize their stress.

Twenty-four hours before trapping, withhold food, but always continue to provide water. This will ensure that the cats are hungry enough to go into the traps. Remind other caregivers and neighbors to withhold food as well. If any of the other feeders do not cooperate in withholding food, make sure the bait you use in the traps is more tempting than the food they leave out, and pick up any food you spot.

Don't forget to test the traps before setting them out in the trapping area.

2. Prepare the traps.

Tag the trap and line the bottom if desired. You may need to have several different areas to set traps when trapping an entire colony; in this case, tag the traps with a description of the location so that you can return the cats exactly where you trapped them. Some trappers like to give the cats a more comfortable surface to walk on when entering the trap. Newspaper, folded lengthwise, can be used, but be sure to secure it to the trap with tape or magnets so a breeze will not move the newspaper and frighten the cats. Other lining materials include thin cardboard, leaves/weeds, or magnetic air vent covers. Be sure the trap lining doesn't prevent the trap door from closing and locking completely. Whether you line the traps or not while trapping the cats, the traps should be lined with newspaper once the trapped cats are in the holding area.

Tip: When using a trap with a narrow trip plate, some trappers like to tape on a cardboard extender to approximately double the length of the trip plate, making it more difficult for a cat to step or reach over the trip plate to eat the bait. The cardboard may be taped to the front or the back of the trip plate. Both methods are effective, though some people feel the extender is more reliable if attached to the front of the trip plate, while others feel that attaching cardboard to the back of the trip plate reduces the chance of a cat's tail getting caught by the trap door. (See illustrations.)



A cardboard extender for a short trip plate decreases the chance of a cat stepping or reaching over the trip plate to eat the bait without getting trapped. You can tape the extender either to the front of the plate (left) or to the rear (right). Photo credit: ASPCA

Place the traps. When placing each trap on the ground, make certain it is stable and will not rock or tip—cats will not enter an unstable trap. A stick or rock can sometimes stabilize the trap – improvise as you would to secure a wobbly table. Do not place the trap on a hillside or incline. If you are using multiple traps, stagger them and have them facing different directions so as to avoid having cats see others getting trapped. If you have to place traps in the hot sun or cold wind, partially cover the trap to provide shelter. Try to place the traps where they will attract a cat and be camouflaged, for example, near a bush. (You may find there are certain “lucky spots” where cats are more willing to walk into traps; as cats are trapped, you can move new traps into the lucky spots.) Move quietly and slowly so your movements will not frighten cats away.

Bait the traps. First, ensure the trip plate is functioning properly. Place approximately one tablespoon of bait (tuna, sardines, mackerel, or other strong smelling food—usually the ones in oil work best) at the very back of the trap, so that the cat will step on the trigger plate while attempting to reach the food. You may choose to put the food in a lid or container for this, but make sure that it does not have sharp edges that could harm the cat once trapped. Drizzle some juice from the bait in a zigzag pattern along the trap floor toward the entrance and just outside the entrance. You can also place a tiny bit of food (½ teaspoon) just inside the entrance of the trap to encourage the cat to walk in. **Do not use too much food at the entrance** of the trap for two reasons: 1) the cat may be satisfied before making it to the trip plate, and 2) if you are trapping just before your spay/neuter appointment, you want to be sure the cats have a relatively empty stomach. Ideally, cats should not eat for at least 8 hours before surgery. If the cat has eaten just before arriving at the clinic, notify the clinic so they will be prepared to deal with the situation.

Set the traps. Be sure the front door has enough clearance to snap shut without getting caught on a branch, curb, fence, log, etc. Check to make sure the rear door is locked or

hooked. We recommend using zip ties if there is any doubt about the strength of the rear-door lock.

3. Keep track of the traps at all times. Traps should never be left completely unattended, especially in an unsafe area. Check the traps frequently from a distance. Choose a location to wait where you are far enough away to give the cats a sense of safety, but close enough so that you can see them. Leaving the immediate area for a short time may be necessary to trap a particularly wary cat. If you are trapping with someone else, keep conversation quiet and minimal so you won't distract the cats.

There are several reasons to make sure you always have an eye on the traps. Leaving a cat uncovered in a trap for too long will increase the cat's stress and could lead to injury if they thrash against the cage. (You may want to place a sheet over just the back part of the trap—not the front—before you place the trap so you can easily cover the entire thing after the cat is caught. This could also encourage the cat to go inside the trap since it appears to be a covered, safe place, though some trappers think cats feel less threatened when they can see through the back of the trap.) When in a trap, the cat is exposed—and could be injured by other animals or a malicious person. Also, traps may be stolen, damaged, or sprung, or someone who does not understand your intentions may release a trapped cat. Always take an exact count of your traps at the beginning and end of your trapping day to confirm that no open trap has been left out in the trapping area.

In larger colonies there may be multiple trapping locations. It is important not to leave any traps unsupervised, so consider bringing multiple trappers to help. If you are trapping alone don't put out more traps than you can keep an eye on.

Be prepared for the fact that you may trap cats who are already eartipped. If you do, it is sometimes best to hold that cat in the trap, covered, until the cats you are aiming for have been trapped. Then you can release the eartipped cat(s).

You may end up trapping two cats in one trap. Each cat has to be in his own trap for sanitary reasons and for transport to the veterinarian, so you will need to separate the cats. But this can wait until the cats are in the safety of an enclosed holding area.

Trapping a feral cat may take some time; be patient. It may take the cat several minutes to go into the trap, so make sure the trap is sprung, and the cat securely trapped, before you approach the trap.

4. After the cat has been trapped, spring into action. Move calmly but promptly and cover the entire trap with a sheet or piece of cloth before moving it. Using these trap covers will help to keep the cats calm. If they can't see out of the traps, they will realize there is no escape route. Move trapped cats away to a quiet, safe area to avoid scaring any remaining, un-trapped cats.

It is normal for cats to thrash around inside the trap. You may be tempted to release a thrashing cat because you fear that she will hurt herself, but cats calm down once the trap is completely covered. Remember, you are doing this for her benefit. If she is released, she will continue to breed, and you may not be able to trap her again. Also, most injuries from traps are very minor, such as a bruised or bloody nose or a scratched paw pad.

You should never open the trap or try to touch a conscious or semi-conscious feral cat. Behave appropriately around trapped cats by being calm, quiet, and not touching them, even if they usually act friendly toward you when you are feeding.

When an entire colony is being trapped from the same area, it may not make sense to take each cat from the location directly after the trap is sprung, especially if the trapped cats are behaving in a relatively calm manner. This could disturb the area and scare the other cats away. Instead, when you are setting the traps out you can partially cover them to help calm the cats once they are trapped. Since they will at least have part of the trap that is covered, they can feel safe and you can keep the trap where it is. This helps reduce stress to the trapped cat and reduce the odds of other cats being frightened away.

Keep in mind that these are guidelines and some situations will call for you to deviate from them. For example, if a cat is severely thrashing around you may need to go ahead and cover the trap and remove it from the area, or if you are trapping in cold weather, cats should be covered and moved to a warm location (like a car) as soon as they are trapped.

During a quiet moment when no other cats are investigating the set traps, or if the trapped cats are making noise and deterring other cats from approaching the traps, remove the full traps and put them in the holding vehicle. Re-bait any traps that have had the bait eaten but have not sprung, and check to be sure the trip plate is in working order – but be careful to catch the door when testing the trap so it does not make a startling noise.

5. You may be faced with particularly hard-to-trap cats. Cats can become trap-shy—frightened to go near or enter a trap, or trap-savvy—mastered the art of removing food without triggering the trap. Don't be discouraged. There are several unique but straightforward techniques to humanely trap hard-to-trap-cats. Read these tips in the **Selective Trapping and Trap-Shy Cats** section.

6. Count your traps again when you are finished to ensure you didn't leave any traps behind.

7. Tips for safe transport. Never put trapped cats in the trunk of a car or the open bed of a pickup truck—this is unsafe and it terrifies the cats. If traps must be stacked

inside the vehicle, be sure to secure the traps with bungee cords or other restraints, and place puppy pads, heavy plastic, or newspaper between the stacked traps. If an unsecured trap tips sideways or upside down, it can open and release the cat (this is especially true of the brown Tru Catch traps). If it seems precarious, it won't work. Don't take the risk. To keep the transport vehicle clean, place sheets of thick plastic, or plastic and newspaper, under the traps in case any of the cats eliminate in transit.

If you do stack traps for transport, be extremely careful when stacking and unstacking. Trap doors can easily get caught on each other and accidentally open.

In-Trap Care

1. Pre-surgical care. If your appointments are not within a few hours of the trapping, keep the cats in their covered traps in the indoor holding area set aside for post-surgical recovery. The traps should be lined with clean newspaper. This area should be a dry, temperature-controlled environment away from dangers such as toxic fumes, other animals, noise, or people. Your trapping should coincide with the clinic's ability to neuter within 1-3 days of trapping, so the cats don't remain in their traps for long.

If you are holding the cats for more than 8 hours before surgery, provide them with wet food and change the newspaper at least twice daily. Always use a trap divider when feeding and cleaning, to prevent cats from escaping the traps and for your own safety. We recommend using two trap dividers and threading the dividers horizontally through the trap bars, to ensure that the cat can't push past them. You will use this same protocol, with a few modifications, for post-surgical care (see the next chapter).



Left: Always use a trap divider when feeding and cleaning. Right: Newspaper layers should be thick enough so that the cat will not feel the bars underneath. Photo credits: ASPCA

You can usually get the cat to move to one end of the trap by lifting the cover from the end where you want to work. Most feral cats will want to go to the “safe” covered end of the trap (“light to dark”). But some cats prefer to go to the uncovered end of the trap in hopes of escaping (“dark to light”). Use these behaviors to your advantage. Occasionally, you will have to gently nudge a frightened cat with the trap divider to get him to move. Never try to push a cat with your hands. Once the cat is in one end of the trap, insert the divider in the center, and be sure it is secure in case the cat tries to push against it. Whenever possible, insert the divider horizontally (this is the most secure position), or use two dividers.



Left: Not recommended – the trap liner prevents the divider from passing through the mesh in the bottom of the trap. Right: The most secure divider position -- two dividers are inserted horizontally in the trap. Photo credits: Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals

We recommend keeping a caretaker log of each cat, especially if there are multiple caretakers in the holding/recovery area (see page 93 in **Resources**). This will help you to note and act on any health concerns both before and after surgery.

Remove all food the night before surgery as directed by the veterinarian. Kittens, however, may have food within a few hours of surgery.

Important: It is possible for a cat to die from hypothermia or heat stroke when confined in a trap indoors or outdoors during holding and recovery. A simple guideline—if it is too hot or cold in the holding area for you, then it is too hot or cold for the cats. Be cautious when leaving traps on the floor or ground -- it may be excessively hot or cold. If you have no other place to put traps, two long pieces of lumber will elevate a row of traps off the too-cold or too-hot ground.

2. Separating two cats caught in one trap. Sometimes cats who are bonded will be caught in the same trap. Do not be alarmed; it is unlikely that the cats will hurt each other. However, for health and safety reasons, the cats should be placed in separate traps.

Separating trapped cats is a two-person job and should be done in the holding space, not outdoors. To transfer one of the cats to a second trap, begin by separating the two cats with a trap divider inserted horizontally through the bars and cover the first trap. Next, put the covered trap and the second trap with their sliding doors facing each other and touching. Cover the second trap. Once this is done, open the doors of both traps. Make sure that the two trap doors are touching and will not separate – use a wall and/or a helper to hold both traps securely in place. Then lift the cover off the front of the first trap. The cat should go into the fully covered second trap. If the cat does not go into the second

trap, lift the cover on the far end of that trap and the cat should go in, seeing the uncovered end as an escape route. As soon as the cat enters the new trap, make sure the door is locked. Lock the door on the first trap, remove the divider, and cover the trap.

3. Take the cats to a veterinary practice or a spay/neuter clinic. When you bring the cats in, reconfirm what the vet will be doing: sterilization, vaccination, and left eartipping. Confirm that only dissolvable sutures will be used, eliminating the need for a follow-up visit to remove stitches. If you have special requests, such as no eartipping for an adoptable kitten, be sure to make this clear, preferably in writing. If a particular cat has a condition needing special attention, such as an injury, make sure the clinic has the ability to provide medical treatment other than spay/neuter. It is especially important to communicate your requests clearly when working with a clinic that does not routinely serve TNR cats. Ask the clinic how to reach them if surgical complications occur after the cats are returned to you.

Post-Surgery

1. As soon as the cats are returned to you, do a complete check. Discharge from the clinic can be rushed and stressful, so prepare to be focused and calm. Verify that you have all your cats in the same covered traps. Check that all traps are securely hooked or fastened shut, using zip ties for added security if necessary. Each trap should be lined with clean newspaper or puppy pads. Be sure all cats have been eartipped if requested and clinic ID collars have been removed. Cats should not be wearing e-collars; proper TNR spay/neuter protocol does not require an e-collar. Be sure to collect medical records, including rabies vaccine certificates, and save these.

2. After surgery, allow the cat to recover. Keep the cats indoors in their covered traps and make sure they are dry, in a temperature-controlled environment, and away from loud noises or dangers such as toxic fumes, other animals, or people. When the cats are recovering from anesthesia they are unable to regulate their body temperature. It is important that the recovery location is temperature-controlled to keep the cats from getting too hot or too cold. Ideally, the room should be kept to about 70 degrees. If using space heaters or fans, keep them a safe distance from the cats so they will not overheat or get too cold. Take particular care in large spaces, which can be difficult to regulate.

3. Put your safety first. Keep the traps covered to reduce the cats' stress. Never open the trap doors without inserting a trap divider first and never allow the cats out of the trap. Do not stick your fingers through the bars or attempt to handle the cats.

4. Monitor the cats carefully during the first 24 hours after surgery. Check the cats often for their progress. If you notice bleeding, swelling, lethargy, vomiting, having difficulty breathing, or not fully waking up, get veterinary assistance immediately. Lack of appetite is a concern, but be aware that many healthy cats will refuse to eat in a trap. You may want to shorten the recovery period for a healthy cat who is not eating and is particularly frustrated in the trap.

The incisions on each female cat should be checked daily until she is released, to ensure there is no bleeding, swelling, or discharge. You may need to prop the trap up between tables, or have a friend hold the trap up, and shine a flashlight up on the cat's belly to get a look at the incision. The photos on the next page show normal incisions.

When cats are first returned from the clinic, a small amount of blood spotting on the trap lining is not necessarily cause for alarm. If you see pooling of blood, or if bleeding persists, contact the veterinarian. For more information on common postoperative spay and neuter problems, see the ASPCA's 20-minute webinar, "Postoperative Care for Feral Cats," at ASPCApro.org.

Normal Spay Incision

Incision is closed
- edges of skin
are well adjoined



Some programs may use
tattoo ink to "mark" an animal
as being spayed or neutered

A small, firm lump may or may
not be considered "normal."
Often the lump is a suture knot
which is not concerning.
Occasionally the lump could be
something like a seroma,
abscess, or hernia – all of
which would require a
medical recheck.

Normal Neuter Incision

Incision is open slightly
to allow for drainage



A small amount of
bloody discharge
is normal to see
within 24 hours
post neuter

Photo credits: ASPCA

5. Keep the traps clean. Use a trap divider to keep the cat on one end of the trap while you replace soiled newspaper and spot-clean the trap with a nontoxic cleaner and paper towels as needed. This should be done at least twice a day, usually at the same time as feeding. Placing food and water after cleaning can minimize spillage. Inserting the divider through the sides of the trap is more secure than inserting it through the top of the trap, since the divider would simply be resting on the trap liner rather than protruding through

the bottom mesh of the trap. A cat could easily push past the divider if it is not securely inserted through both sides of the trap. Many experienced trappers use two dividers for added security.

6. Feed and provide the cats with water after they regain consciousness. Wait 8 hours after surgery before feeding adult cats. Kittens under 4 months of age should be fed shortly after waking from anesthesia. When feeding the cats, always have a trap divider or isolator firmly in place between you and the cat before opening the traps. Two dividers or isolators are better than one. An isolator is essential, especially if you have a trap that does not have a back door. Always relock the trap door. If you are working in a group, make sure the tasks are clearly assigned so there is no risk of a cat escaping or not receiving care.

7. Hold cats until they recover. Cats usually need to be held for 24 to 72 hours after surgery, depending on recovery speed. Male cats can be returned to the trapping site 24 hours following neutering, as long as they are fully awake and do not require further medical attention. Females need 48 to 72 hours of recovery, depending on their specific circumstances. You may return nursing mothers 24 hours following surgery, once they completely regain consciousness, so they can get back to their kittens. Forty-eight hours is sufficient for a routine spay, and 72 hours is recommended for a spay-abortion. Make sure all cats are fully conscious, clear-eyed, and alert before release, and check the incision on females once more before releasing them. A small amount of redness is normal, but puffy swelling or bleeding at the suture site should receive veterinary attention.

8. Return the cats. Release the cat in the same spot where you trapped him or her. Pull the cover away from the back door, pull that door up and off, then completely remove the cover and stand back, away from the open door. Do not be concerned if the cat hesitates for a few moments before leaving; she is simply reorienting herself to her surroundings. Sometimes you may not see a cat for a few days after she is returned. Resume the feeding schedule and continue to provide food and water—she may be eating when you are not around. The cat will most likely reappear within 2 to 3 days.



A spayed, eartipped, and vaccinated cat returns to her colony. Photo credit: Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals



for traps.

Photo credit: Urban Cat League

9. Thoroughly clean and disinfect the traps and dividers after each cat is returned. This is a two-step process. First, scrub off all food, paper, and feces from all of the surfaces of the trap. Only then can the trap be effectively disinfected to prevent disease transmission. A solution of one part bleach to 10 parts water is a very effective and safe disinfectant. The bleach solution should remain on traps for 10 minutes before being rinsed off. Alternatives to plain bleach include Clorox Germicidal Bleach and Accel, a one-step hydrogen peroxide based disinfectant cleaner that works in 5 minutes. Never mix or spray any cleaning products when cats are present.

Whether the traps and dividers are borrowed or your own, they must be cleaned and disinfected before they are stored or reused. Only then will they be ready for the next trapping adventure.

A trash can may be used as a washtub

10. Trap any remaining unneutered members of the colony as soon as possible, to complete the colony's Trap-Neuter-Return effort. Refer to the chapter on **Selective Trapping and Trap-Shy Cats** for tips on how to trap in a colony where TNR is only partially complete. Be prepared for the fact that you may re-trap cats who are already eartipped. If you do, it is sometimes best to hold that cat in the covered trap until the cats you are aiming for have been trapped. In these situations, it may be necessary to use a drop trap or a bottle-and-string on a box trap. Note that when using a drop trap, you should always be ready to transfer the cat immediately into a box trap or transfer cage, because a bottomless drop trap is not designed for holding and transporting cats. For more information, see the **Trapping Equipment** chapter.

Working with a Veterinarian

When you find a veterinarian or veterinary clinic willing to spay and neuter feral cats, find out whether they already have a protocol for working with TNR projects. Many communities have pro-TNR policies with subsidized or even free spay/neuter for community cats. If your community does not have such a policy, work with the clinic to establish a protocol so that everyone involved understands what to expect and the cats will receive all of the services they need.

1. Prices. Note the exact charge for spaying and neutering, vaccines, and all other treatments. Figure out the cost of veterinary care for a male and a female cat, so that you can estimate a budget for the whole colony. Spay surgery is typically more expensive than neutering. Some clinics provide the required services at a package fee while some will itemize services related to surgery such as anesthesia and pain medication. Ask if these services are included in the surgery fee. Many clinics will itemize additional services such as vaccinations, flea treatment, deworming, and ear mite medication if needed, and will add fees for these services. Ask if these treatments are optional and then decide which services to request.

Some veterinarians will offer discounts because you are providing a community service. If they do not offer, always ask. You may also be able to locate a low-cost clinic for feral cats by consulting local rescue/TNR groups or through the Alley Cat Allies Feral Friends Network. If the cost of sterilizing the colony is too great, ask for financial help from neighbors and businesses where the colony resides. They may be happy to contribute because you are taking action that will benefit everyone.

2. Appointment Policies. Ask the veterinary clinic how many cats it can accommodate on a single day. This information will guide your trapping activity. Also discuss the unpredictable nature of trapping cats when scheduling appointments. You may intend to trap six cats, but only end up trapping four. Conversely, you may think there are six cats to be trapped and then end up discovering a seventh. It's important that you reach an understanding with the clinic beforehand in case your trapping is more or less successful than predicted. When using a clinic for the first time, stick to the agreed plan to help establish your credibility and reliability. Over time, they may offer more flexibility and understanding of the unpredictability of TNR.

3. Testing Protocols. Ensure that testing for FeLV and FIV is not a requirement of the clinic. We do not recommend routine testing for FeLV and FIV and are against euthanizing cats who test positive unless they are symptomatic. If a veterinarian insists on procedures you do not want, suggest that he familiarize himself with professional resources that relate specifically to feral cats and which are listed at the end of this section. It is widely believed in the TNR community that money spent on retrovirus testing would be better spent on spay/neuter. The main modes of transmission of FIV and FeLV are mating and fighting.

Spaying and neutering cats greatly decreases these activities and is the best way to protect a colony. Removing one affected cat from a colony where FIV or FeLV already exists will not eliminate the risk from the colony.

4. Vaccines. Find out which vaccinations the clinic requires, which they offer, and how much they cost. Cats should receive rabies vaccines, as mandated by your state regulations. If funding is available, FVRCP vaccines are also recommended.

5. Ill or Injured Cats. Get to know the clinic's policies concerning cats who need extra medical attention. Ask that they call you before making any decisions about procedures or how they will treat the cats. Discuss charges for any additional treatments prior to authorizing them to be done. Ensure that you will be given the power to make the ultimate decision regarding humane euthanasia if necessary.

6. Kittens. Does the clinic have age or weight requirements for kitten spay/neuter? Ask for its kitten surgery protocol. Kittens can be safely spayed or neutered as soon as they weigh two pounds, which is usually about 8 weeks of age. However, each veterinary clinic has its own criteria. If your veterinarian is unfamiliar with pediatric spay/neuter, suggest that they familiarize themselves with the process by viewing the how-to webinar listed at the end of this section under **Professional Resources**.

Also, fasting kittens before surgery is different than with adults. Kittens under 4 months old should be fed a small meal 4 hours before surgery because their metabolism is faster than adult cats. See the **Post-Surgery** chapter to learn how to safely feed cats while they are in their traps.

Decide ahead of time whether kittens will be eartipped and returned, or not eartipped and tamed for adoption. When in doubt, have the kitten eartipped, since eartipping has not been shown to have a negative effect on adoptability.

7. Pregnant or In-Heat Females. Will the clinic spay a pregnant female or a female in estrus (in heat) and are they experienced in the procedure? Is there an extra fee for this? While dogs in estrus are never spayed, veterinarians commonly spay cats in estrus with no complications.

8. Recovery. Find out when the clinic will discharge cats after surgery and if they have different discharge times for males, females, pregnant females, etc. Ask if they hold cats overnight for recovery in their clinic and if so, if there is an extra charge for this service. Having this information ahead of time will help you plan your transportation and holding needs efficiently.

9. Other Protocols. Confirm that they use dissolvable sutures and no follow-up appointment is needed, and that they will remove all items attached to the cats, such as tags and collars, that may have been used to identify them in the clinic. Also confirm that

they will left-eartip the cats. Make sure there is agreement ahead of time on treatment in winter months, such as shaving less fur for surgery preparation. Be sure to ask the veterinarian's staff to replace any soiled newspaper in the bottom of the trap with fresh newspaper while the cats are anesthetized. E-collars should never be used on feral cats. A proper TNR spay/neuter does not require an e-collar. Also, remember that there are many different kinds of traps and your vet clinic may need to be shown how an individual trap locks and unlocks.

10. If you are a novice trapper, you may want to remind the staff up-front that this is your first TNR project so they will not assume you already know the routine procedures. They are more likely to be patient, answer your questions, and explain things in detail.

11. Professional Resources for Veterinarians. If your veterinarian would like more information on working with feral cats, you can refer him or her to these online resources:

- Alley Cat Allies Feral Cat Veterinary Resource Center
(www.alleycat.org/Veterinary)
- ASPCA Webinar: High Quality-High Volume Spay/Neuter
(<http://aspcapro.org/webinar/2012-02-23-000000/high-quality-high-volume-spayneuter>)
- ASPCA How-To: Pediatric Spay/Neuter (<http://aspcapro.org/resource/shelter-health-animal-care/pediatric-spayneuter>)
- ASPCA Webinar: Postoperative Care for Feral Cats
(<http://www.aspcapro.org/webinar/2011-03-10-000000/postoperative-care-feral-cats>)
- AVMA Collections: Feral Cats
(<https://www.avma.org/news/journals/collections/pages/avma-collections-feral-cats.aspx>)
- Special Considerations for Community Cats at Spay/Neuter Clinics: Best Practices for Medical and Management Protocols
(<http://aspcapro.org/special-considerations-community-cats-spayneuter-clinics>)

Trapping Equipment

A basic box trap is a painless and humane method of safely capturing cats. Regardless of the level of socialization, do not attempt to pick up a cat or kitten to put her in a carrier. Use a humane box trap or drop trap to ensure the safety of the cats and you.

1. Make sure you have enough traps for the entire colony. Mass trapping all the cats at once has distinct advantages over TNRed a few cats at a time. It can be tricky trying to trap the remaining unneutered cats while feeding the TNRed cats in a colony. If you do not have access to enough traps for a one-time mass trapping you will have to trap the cats in smaller groups. See the section on **Selective Trapping and Trap-Shy Cats** for tips on successfully completing TNR on a staggered schedule.

2. You may be able to borrow some traps in your area, from a local rescue or TNR group, or animal shelter. Determine an animal shelter's policy toward feral cats before borrowing—some require you to return the trap and the cat.

3. There are several companies that sell humane box traps. The companies listed below are two we have come to use after decades of testing and trapping, though they do not represent a comprehensive list. Experienced trappers have their own preferences. If you borrow traps from local caregivers or trappers, ask them to teach you how to work with each specific trap.

Listing these companies here does not in any way imply an endorsement by Alley Cat Allies, the ASPCA, or the Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals, nor are these organizations responsible for the content of the websites or the utility of the equipment.

Tru Catch Trap/Manufacturing Systems, Inc.
300 Industrial St. PO Box 816
Belle Fourche, SD 57717-0816
Phone: 800.247.6132 or 650.892.2717
Website: www.trucatchtraps.com

Tomahawk Live Trap Co.
P.O. Box 325
Tomahawk, Wisconsin 54487
Phone: 800.272.8727 or 715.453.3550
Fax: 715.453.4326
Website: www.Livetraps.com

4. Research the correct size trap. There is a standard “cat” size trap available, though we prefer the larger “raccoon” or “feral cat” trap because it gives the cats more space

during holding and recovery. Trappers sometimes find the “kitten” or “squirrel” size handy, but they are not always necessary, since kittens can be caught in cat-size traps.

5. Look for the right features and consider additional equipment needs.




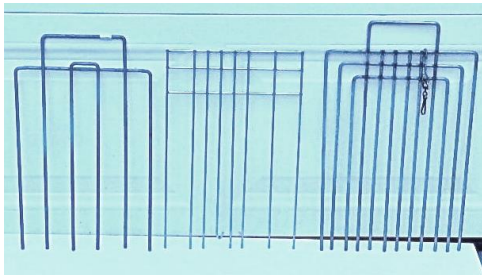
 <p>Photo credit: Alley Cat Allies</p>	<p>Back Door – One of the most important features in a trap is a back door that shuts like a guillotine. Having a second door facilitates in-trap cat care; it enables you to feed and clean in each end of the trap while using a trap divider to keep the cat isolated safely on the other end.</p>
 <p>Photo credit: Alley Cat Allies</p>	<p>Transfer Cage – These small cages are useful for transporting a large number of cats in a small vehicle. They are not suitable for holding or recovery, but they can be very helpful. When moving a cat from a standard box trap to a transfer cage, be sure the size of the doors match up and conduct the transfer in a closed room.</p>
  <p>Photo credits: Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals</p>	<p>Trap divider (a.k.a. isolator) – This looks like a large pick (or comb). The isolator is inserted into the side or top of a trap to confine the cat in one end of the trap for safe cleaning and feeding during holding and recovery care. (This device is sometimes used in place of a squeeze cage by your veterinarian to confine the cat in a small portion of the trap for sedation.)</p>
	<p>Feral Cat Recovery Cage – This relatively spacious cage from Tru Catch reduces stress when you must hold a feral cat for several</p>



Photo credit: Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals

days for treatment and/or recovery from an injury or extensive surgery. It is also more effective than a trap for evaluating a cat's level of socialization. This cage has openings that line up with the doors on most standard sized box traps for easy transfer.



Photo credit: Alley Cat Allies

Feral Cat Den (a.k.a. Feral Cat Handler) –

This den provides a quiet hiding place when put in a larger recovery cage where the cat is being held, along with a litter box, food, and water. The cat enters the den by a porthole on the side that you easily slide shut once the cat is inside. You can then safely remove the cat for cage cleaning, treatment, or transportation. A vertical sliding door makes it easy to transfer the cat to another cage or return the cat to the den for recovery after surgery.



Photo credits: ASPCA

Drop Traps – If you are dealing with a particularly hard-to-trap cat, you may need a drop trap. Drop traps allow you to catch a cat who is reluctant to enter the confined space of a box trap. They are also useful for trapping one cat out of a group. These traps are generally large, bottomless mesh boxes that, when triggered by you with a rope, fall down over the cat. When using a drop trap, you should always be ready to transfer the cat immediately into a box trap or transfer cage, because a bottomless drop trap is not designed for holding and transporting cats. For this reason, we recommend that you have a helper when using a drop trap. Several companies sell drop traps such as the Tomahawk model shown here. You may also build your own using instructions from www.alleycat.org or other TNR websites.

Other Items for Trapping

In addition to traps, you will need some basic supplies (optional items are in italics):

- Trap covers: Enough big pieces of fabric, blankets, or sheets to fully cover each trap after cats are caught (a twin bedsheet torn in half is the right size for most traps)
- Trap labels: Use tie-on labels, paper labels attached with duct tape, or wide masking tape. Be sure there is enough space to write the trapping location, your name, the name of your organization, and the name or a description of each cat.
- A pen or permanent marker to fill out the trap labels
- Bait for traps: Several large pop-top cans of tuna, mackerel, sardines or other smelly bait, preferably oil packed (if you don't bring pop-top cans, be sure to bring a can opener)
- Plastic forks or spoons (to scoop out the bait)
- Small bowls, plates, or other container to hold bait in traps (be sure they will not interfere with the trip plates of the traps)
- Small food storage container or pet food lid (big enough to cover open cans of bait still in use, to prevent spillage)
- A large sheet of heavy plastic to protect the inside of your vehicle from spilled bait, cat urine, and sharp edges of traps. Puppy pads also work well, should there be accidents.
- Dry and canned cat food and water (to leave at the end of trapping for cats not trapped)
- Trash bags (for recycling bait cans, used plastic silverware, etc.)
- *Newspapers or other material to line the bottom of the traps*
- *Tape to hold newspaper to trap floor, if necessary (especially for windy days)*
- *A roll of paper towels*
- *One pair of thick gloves per trapper (wear these for your safety while carrying cats in traps)*
- *Antibacterial hand wipes, baby wipes, or antibacterial gel (for cleaning yourself, the traps, and any messes)*
- *Tools such as pliers and some WD-40 for traps that might not work properly*
- *First-aid kit*
- *Bungee cords (to secure traps in your car so they don't slide around)*
- *Feral Cat Colony Tracking System and pen or pencil and clipboard*
- *Camera to take identifying photos of trapped cats*
- *Binoculars*
- *Flashlight*
- *Drinking water and snacks (for you)*
- *Appropriate weather-related clothing and practical shoes*
- *Informational brochures (to help you explain the project to onlookers)*

Colony Care – Best Practices

Practicing responsible colony care is a strong step toward gaining general acceptance of the presence of the cats by the community. Caretakers can use this best practices guide to promote the cats' well-being, improve their relationships with neighbors, and assist the people who live nearby to understand and coexist with the cats. Good colony care will address many common complaints that arise over community cats while providing high quality care for the colony.

The basic elements of good colony care are:

1. Completing Trap-Neuter Return of the Entire Colony
2. Conducting Maintenance Trapping on New Cats
3. Providing Food and Water
4. Providing Shelter
5. Monitoring Members of the Colony and Providing Ongoing Health Care
6. Helping Cats and People to Coexist – What You Can Do
7. Planning for Consistent Colony Care: Establishing a Network of Caretakers

1. Completing Trap-Neuter Return of the Entire Colony in a Timely Manner

Neuter, vaccinate, eartip, and return all feral cats in the colony, including those who only visit sporadically.

Neutering and vaccinating are the best things that can be done for stray and feral cats. They will be healthier and live longer if they are neutered. The females will not continuously undergo the stress of pregnancy and nursing and, male cats will not fight for mates or roam in search of females with whom to mate. Neutering virtually eliminates the transmission of feline diseases spread through mating, such as FIV.

Eliminating mating behaviors will also make the cats good neighbors and help foster good community relations.

2. Conducting Maintenance Trapping on New Cats

Newcomers may periodically appear in your colony; they should be trapped, neutered and vaccinated as soon as they appear. Newcomers to a colony are often tame strays, so you need to decide whether you are equipped to expand your TNR project to include rescue and adoption of tame cats, or to enlist the help of an experienced rescue or adoption organization. Only young kittens and cats who are already friendly to humans can be adopted into homes. The Alley Cat Allies **Socialized Cat Guide**

(www.alleycat.org/SocializedCats) offers comprehensive advice on adoptions and kitten socialization. Bear in mind that cat behavior in a colony is not necessarily indicative of a cat's adoptability. Refer to the **Is That Cat Feral?** chapter to help you determine the level of a cat's socialization toward humans.

3. Providing Food and Water

Provide adequate food and water for the cats on a regular basis, year-round. Feed during daylight hours for your safety and so that you can easily assess the members of the colony.

Food: Nutrition and Seasonal Considerations

The amount of food a cat needs depends on her size, the weather, and what other food sources are available. Expect an adult feral cat to eat roughly 5.5 ounces of wet (canned) cat food and 2 ounces of dry food daily (increase to a half cup if only feeding dry). Cats vary in their needs, and so some will eat considerably more food, others less.

While gauging how much to leave, observe the cats and use your discretion based on the time it takes for the food to be eaten. If the cats eat all of the food in 15 minutes or less, consider putting out a bit more. If there is consistently food remaining after a half hour, put out a bit less. Be aware, though, that some of the cats you are feeding may not approach the feeding station when a human is present.

Although wet food has distinct health benefits, feeding a colony dry food alone may be necessary in extreme heat and cold. If you know the colony will eat right away, and you plan to feed canned food, consider warming the food prior to arriving at the site and using insulated bags to keep the food warm during travel. In the winter, especially in colder locations, expect the colony to consume more food because they will need extra calories to maintain energy levels. By fueling a cat's immune system with the best nutrition you can afford, you will provide him with the best defense against illness.

To discourage other animals, insects and wildlife, the goal is to put out only as much food as the cats can finish in a relatively short period of time. Excessive amounts of food can attract rodents, slugs, and flies, and lead to complaints from neighbors. Determining the right amount of food may take some trial and error, but is worth it.

Within a colony, cats with seniority or stronger personalities may eat before those who are lower on the social scale. Do not be concerned about or try to manage this social interaction. It is perfectly normal, and as long as you leave enough food for everyone, the shy ones will get their share. By keeping a consistent feeding time, the cats will learn when to expect food and they will be waiting for you to arrive.

Water

Outdoor cats need clean water daily and during all conditions. If it is not practical to wash the bowl daily, bring paper towels and extra water to clean the bowl periodically.

Throughout the winter months, here are tips to keep the water from freezing:

- Refilling water bowls on a consistent schedule will quickly teach the cats when fresh water will arrive each day;
- If possible, refill the bowls with hot or warm water;
- Use heated water bowls (if near an electrical outlet);
- Keep the water in the sun, using dark colored bowls that will absorb the sun's heat;
- Use microwavable disks called Snuggle Safe Disc, or disposable air-activated hand warmers, under the water bowl;
- Surround the top and sides of the feeding area with plexiglass to create a greenhouse environment for the water;
- If there is a water source like a spigot, run the water slightly, since it won't freeze as quickly as still water; and
- Shield the bowl from wind.

If you notice that the cats are not using the water you provide, try moving it a short distance away from their food. Cats sometimes prefer this arrangement.

Feeding Locations and Stations

Though it is not a requirement, providing a feeding station and establishing a specific area for feeding has many advantages over feeding out in the open. Feeding stations protect the food from the elements by raising it off of the ground and/or shielding it with a roof, and they can be designed to provide the cats with shelter while eating. An established feeding area also helps with Trap-Neuter-Return efforts, since cats will arrive to eat at the same place every day, making it easy to know where to trap.

Location of the feeding station is important. Food should be situated away from high traffic areas and not too close to either the cats' winter shelters or the place where they eliminate. Some caregivers create a feeding station in their garage, shed, or carport if the colony is near their home.

When colonies live at a workplace environment, school campus, or on private property that you do not own or control, you must negotiate a mutually agreeable feeding location with the owner or management. Feeding on someone else's property without permission can lead to conflict and may create resentment that jeopardizes the cats' safety. It is well

worth the effort to track down a property owner and obtain permission to feed the cats on property that is not yours.

Never feed in or around winter shelters because it can lead to fights among cats and a dominant cat may prevent lower-ranking cats from using shelters. It can also attract wildlife to the shelters.

Never leave food near the nest of a nursing mother – this could attract other cats or predators to the kittens. The mother cat will prefer to leave her kittens at a safe distance from the other cats while she comes to eat at the feeding station. She will move her nest if she feels there is too much activity near the nest.

A visible feeding station placed with the property owner's permission will make a TNR program appear more legitimate – it is a clear reminder that someone is caring for and about the cats. A feeding station can be used to educate others in the neighborhood – many caretakers post signs providing information about how to contribute or volunteer, and explaining that the cats are fed on a schedule (so people should not leave food).

On the other hand, you may need to keep a low profile for your colony if there are people in the area who pose a threat to the cats or are inclined to complain about the cats. In that case, a camouflaged feeding station will hide where the cats eat, make the cats' presence less obvious, and make colony management easier for the caretaker.

Making a Feeding Station



The Alley Cat Allies feeding station.

Photo credit: Alley Cat Allies

Feeding stations come in all shapes and sizes and they can be simple or elaborate. The simplest feeding station is a ready-made sheltered spot such as a hole in a wall. A plastic storage bin is easily repurposed into a shelter by removing the lid and turning the bin on its side. A simple canopy can be made with a piece of tarp. Suitable feeding stations can also be built from scratch using basic or advanced carpentry skills. An example of a durable purpose-built feeding station is the Alley Cat Allies feeding station (plans for building this shelter are available at alleycat.org/ColonyCare).

Cleanliness

It is essential to keep the feeding location neat and clean, both for the health of the cats and for good community relations. Disposable plates may be convenient, but when empty they can blow around and cause complaints about garbage. Remember, complaints regarding the feeding area are usually directed mainly at the cats, not the human caretakers. Heavier reusable food bowls will stay in place but they do require cleaning. If it is not practical to wash food bowls daily, bring paper towels, a scrub brush, and extra water to clean the bowls.

Removing food bowls between meals can enhance community relations. Besides any containers you use for the cats, there may be litter and trash in your feeding area. Removing all of this daily or weekly will help to keep the feeding station sanitary and unobtrusive. It is important to pick up the trash in the area, even if it is garbage you did not create. This helps to avoid possible health code or sanitation violations, maintain positive relations with the local residents, and keep the area sanitary for the cats.

Deterring Insects and Wildlife

There are some simple and practical ways to make your feral cat feeding stations insect-free and avoid attracting wildlife.

Slugs. Gardeners know that slugs will not cross copper, so we can use this to benefit the cats, too. Amazon.com has many different brands of copper tape, and most garden supply stores carry it, too. **Corry's Slug & Snail Copper Tape Barrier** is available for less than \$10 online. It has a strong adhesive backing and the paper peels off easily. At 15 feet per roll, one roll can enough to go around an entire feeding station, or wrap it around individual bowls or gravity feeders.

Ants are easily foiled with that old trick of putting the food in a pan of water, creating a "moat" that they can't cross. This is cheap and effective, but cleaning the pan and changing the messy water is just one more chore to contend with. If you can afford to upgrade, you might want to try one of the "ant-proof" feeding bowls on the market. These eliminate the need for the water barrier entirely. These bowls have a central base that sets the bowl just off the ground. Ants are smart, but they can't figure out how to get to the food.

If you order online, check the size carefully. Many of the available bowls are for dogs, so make sure to order a size you like, and not a giant bowl sized for a large dog. The **GoGo Anti-Ant No-Tip Dish** is one of the best and cheapest bowls. You can set another dish inside the bowl to avoid the need to clean the dish onsite, or get a few bowls to take back

and forth to wash at home. This anti-ant dish comes in 8-, 16-, 24-, and 32-oz. sizes and is available online. Check around for different products and the lowest prices.

There are also platforms available that use the moat principle — they hold water inside. You can place either a dry feeder or wet food dishes on the platform. The platform available from **AntBlocker.com** allows you to refill the water through a hole on top. This is faster and easier than using the **Antster**, which requires that you take apart the platform to refill it. Again, check the sizes available to make sure you aren't surprised when it arrives. Measure the footprint you'll need to fit the dishes or feeders you want to set on it.

To see many of the ant-proof options available, visit **Alley Cat Allies' Colony Care Guide** at alleycat.org/ColonyCare.

Flies retire for the day at sundown, which is when cats come out of hiding and find their appetite in hot weather. Feeding at sundown will eliminate any problem with flies, and if you are trying to be discreet with your feeding, the cats will eat during the dark hours and you can whisk away the dishes in the morning just as the flies are moving in to work on the dirty dishes. Food left in the morning in summer will most likely be rancid and covered with fly eggs by evening when the cats come out to eat. Avoid the presence of flies and their eggs by feeding at sundown if at all possible. Unless your colony comes to eat right away in the mornings, feeding in the morning in summer can also be a source of complaints from humans who smell the rotting food or see the swarms of flies during the daylight hours. You know your cats best, but if you can train them to eat at sundown, neither flies nor complaining humans will be a problem. Drawing little attention to a colony is often best for both the cats and for community relations.

Wildlife. The best way to deter wildlife is to avoid overfeeding. Excess food attracts rodents, raccoons, skunks, and other wildlife. Because some of these animals come out at night, you may need to feed during the day and remove all uneaten food after dark. Adjust your feeding routine to address the specific wildlife at your feeding site.

Resources for Obtaining Food

There are many avenues of support for caregivers to find affordable or free food:

- Check for surplus food at your local humane society or human food bank.
- Ask your local market or pet supply store to donate broken packages or dented cans. Some retailers will also donate out-of-date products, which are still good for a few months longer than the sell-by date.
- Ask local vet clinics if they have surplus or just-out-of-date premium pet foods that they are willing to donate.

- Announce a cat food drive in the local paper to collect donations from the public. Your workplace, local religious institutions, and civic or youth groups may be willing to help with the cat food drive as well.
- Ask local markets and pet supply shops if you may put out an attractive bin requesting cat food donations.

4. Providing Shelter

Providing a shelter for cats means they will not have to go looking in neighbors' crawl spaces or porches for a warm, dry place to rest. It can keep them safe from the elements and help you control their location and deter them from seeking shelter where they are not wanted. An insulated winter cat shelter may save your cats' lives in the cold weather.

The minimum size for a shelter is about 12" x 18" x 12" and will fit a single cat. A 24" x 24" x 18" shelter will fit three or four cats. Larger shelters are not necessarily better, because if they are not filled with cats then the heat disperses quickly, leaving the inside as cold as the outside. A space just big enough for three to five cats to huddle is best. Cats generally use shelters during winter months more than others. Consider size for transport in a vehicle to and from the colony site as well. If there is a risk of tampering, camouflage the shelter(s) as well as possible using paint and any surrounding vegetation. Anything that stands out could be mistaken for trash and could bring unwanted attention to the cats.

Many different designs for effective winter cat shelters are available online. Some can be made with very little skill and free or cheap materials, and others require basic carpentry skills, tools, and more elaborate materials. Ready-made shelters are also available for purchase. The NYC Feral Cat Initiative has a list of links to recommended websites about winter shelters at nycferalcat.org.

Bedding

No matter which shelter design you use, it is important that you put proper bedding inside. Blankets and towels don't work well because they do not insulate and can retain wetness. Straw repels moisture and provides insulation, making it ideal for keeping cats warm and comfortable all winter long. Be sure that you buy straw, which is bedding, and not hay, which is feed. Alley Cat Allies provides detailed information about using and buying straw at alleycat.org/straw. In rare cases, some cats are allergic to straw and develop rashes or upper respiratory symptoms. For those cats, synthetic bedding such as polar fleece and heat-reflective cat mats, will keep them warm if used in waterproof shelters.

5. Monitoring Members of the Colony and Providing Ongoing Health Care

Keeping track of members of your colony, their health, new cats who have joined the colony who may need to be neutered, and your ongoing Trap-Neuter-Return program allows you to monitor your progress and provides you with evidence of your ongoing, post-TNR responsible care of the colony.

General Health

It is a good idea to keep an eye on the cats for general good health. Common indicators of health problems or injury include: changes in behavior, changes in eating habits, dull eyes or coat, discharge from the nose or eyes, weight loss, fur loss, changes in their gait, and listlessness.

Have a plan with your veterinarian for how to handle any health problems and for ongoing colony care. When a health problem occurs, speak with your veterinarian first and describe the symptoms so that you can decide together if a sick cat needs to be trapped and examined.

For ongoing colony care, ask your veterinarian to provide you with deworming medicine and antibiotics to have on hand to care for minor health problems. Have a financial plan in place for any cats who may need veterinary care due to injury or illness. It is important to find a veterinarian or low-cost clinic familiar with or willing to learn how to work with feral cats. Your local rescue/TNR group or a member of the Alley Cat Allies Feral Friends network can offer advice and information. If the veterinarian you ultimately choose has no experience with feral cats, he or she can learn more about treating feral cats. See the chapter on **Working with a Veterinarian** for information on finding a feral-friendly vet.

Flea Control

Your veterinarian can apply a long-lasting topical flea control product such as Advantage® when the cats are anesthetized for neutering (the topical product Revolution® has the benefit of also treating ear mites and roundworms). There are also oral flea medications that can be added to the food; nitenpyram (Capstar®) kills adult fleas and lufenuron (Program®) kills eggs and larvae, but it can be difficult to properly dose feral cats who share food.

Change the bedding in shelters at least twice a year. At that time, spray or dust the floor with a cat-safe flea control product. Or, sprinkle food-grade diatomaceous earth beneath the straw to deter fleas. Sprinkling mint or dried pyrethrum flowers beneath the bedding may also help. Fleas are a natural part of life outdoors, so while you can try your best to control them, they are not something you need to be worried about excessively.

Deworming

It is not uncommon for feral cat colonies to have tapeworms or roundworms. Cats acquire tapeworms by ingesting fleas when grooming. They can ingest roundworms via infected rodents or feces. These worms can be treated with dewormer when cats are taken in for neutering. If you find that your colony of already neutered cats has worms, it is not something you need to worry about a lot. Worms will not harm otherwise healthy cats. However, you can mix a liquid dewormer such as pyrantel pamoate (Strongid®) or fenbendazole (Panacur®), which have a wide safety margin, in with wet food.

Many caregivers have successfully used medicated treats to medicate cats who have worms or other health conditions. You can purchase these from online pharmacies that compound veterinary prescriptions into treats, including BCP VetChews, Wedgewood Pharmacy, and Roadrunner Pharmacy.

Record Keeping

You should hold on to all medical records for each cat in every colony for which you care. A medical record should contain a listing of each vaccination (especially rabies) and any other medical procedures. The record should also include documentation of the cat's neuter and, if the cat was micro-chipped, the manufacturer, and the number of the chip. Include a photo of each cat with his or her record. Make sure to update the photo occasionally as their coloring and size can change with age.

You should always be prepared for the possibility that someone such as animal control could question the status of your colony. This is why it is important to keep current, accurate health records for all of the cats. Having proof of a cat's rabies vaccination can truly be a lifesaver in some situations.

One way to stay organized is to keep all information for a colony together in a three ring binder. Not only will you be prepared to provide documentation about your cats if needed, you will also represent yourself as well-organized and on top of the situation when conversing with neighbors about the cats.

Use the Alley Cat Allies Feral Cat Colony Tracking System in the **Resources** section at the end of this book to help keep organized records.

Treatment and Recovery of Ill or Injured Cats

As a colony caretaker, you must plan for the eventuality that one or more of your cats will get sick or injured. Find a veterinary practice that accepts feral cats and keep their contact information handy. Plan ahead how you will provide immediate care to, and make decisions about, ill or injured cats. It may help for you to discuss this with your veterinarian; he or she can help you come up with a treatment decision tree for your colony.

If you have decided that a sick or hurt cat should be trapped and brought in for treatment, you may need to make your own arrangements for the cat's recovery if the animal hospital cannot hold the cat. If the cat is feral, you must take care to provide a low-stress recovery environment. You can set up a recovery cage for a feral cat fairly easily, using either a cat condo (see photo), large dog crate, or a specially designed Feral Cat Recovery Cage, with a door that lines up perfectly with the door of a box trap (see the **Trapping Equipment** chapter).

Your veterinarian can help you weigh the risks and benefits of holding a feral cat for an extended period of time. Feral cats become stressed in captivity, even in a quiet recovery environment, so your goal is to get the cat back to his colony as soon as possible.



A cat condo used as a feral cat recovery cage. Photo credit: ASPCA

Place the recovery cage in a safe space – choose this space using the same criteria as for a TNR recovery area. It should be a quiet, temperature-controlled room (about 70 degrees) that is secure from intrusion by other animals and people.

The recovery cage should be large enough to comfortably fit:

- A litter box;
- Food and water bowls; and
- A cat carrier, transfer cage, or feral cat den (see the **Trapping Equipment** chapter).

You will also need a sheet or blanket large enough to cover the entire cage. Covering the cage will help keep a feral cat calm, as in a TNR project where traps are kept covered.

The feeding area should be far enough away from the litter box so that it will not be easily contaminated. Note that some feral cats will not use a litter box, so you may need to experiment with different types of litter or use puppy pads instead.

The cat carrier is a useful tool in the recovery cage. It gives the cat a safe place to hide when the cage cover is lifted for cleaning and feeding, and it gives the cat a place to perch if the cage does not have shelves. If you are using a transfer cage, you should cover it with a towel, leaving only the door uncovered.

The carrier inside the recovery cage also gives you an easier way to transport the cat, as compared to getting the cat back in his trap. Set the carrier up so that you can close the door from outside the recovery cage using a pole and/or string. When you need to take the cat to the veterinarian or release him back in the colony, you just need to remove the cover from the recovery cage and the cat will retreat to the safety of the carrier. Next, quickly close the door of the carrier by pushing it with the pole or pulling the string, and block the door by threading the pole through the bars of the cage and directly in front of the carrier door (see photo on next page).

Note that the purpose-built Feral Cat Recovery Cage allows easy and safe transfer directly to and from a transfer cage or box trap. The method is very similar to the one for transferring a cat from a drop trap to a box trap (see photo and instructions in the **Selective Trapping and Trap-Shy Cats** chapter).

With the cat contained in this way, you can safely open the door of the holding cage to reach in and lock the carrier door. If you are using a transfer cage or feral cat den, you do not need to block the door with a pole; the door will close securely when you use a pole or string to push or pull the door down from the open position.



A broom handle can be used to push the cat carrier door shut and securely block it. Photo credit: ASPCA

6. Helping Cats and People to Coexist – What You Can Do

As the colony caregiver, you are the cats' public relations representative. There are some easy steps you can take help maintain their good image and their good neighbor status in your community. These include preventive measures such as completing TNR of the colony (covered in the first five chapters) and employing the best practices of colony care – such as keeping feeding areas clean and tidy -- described elsewhere in this chapter. To address any concerns or complaints that arise in the community, see the **Community Relations** chapter, or for more in-depth instructions, tips, and examples, see Alley Cat Allies' online Community Relations Resource Center at alleycat.org.

7. Planning for Consistent Colony Care: Establishing a Network of Caretakers

Life is full of the unexpected, but many colony caretakers make the double mistake of “going it alone” and not planning ahead. If something happens to a lone colony caretaker, the cats may be left without a consistent food source, shelter, or an advocate.

We recommend recruiting a caretaking buddy, or better yet, a team of colony caretakers to share the work. At the very least, you should have someone who can be a substitute or “feral cat sitter” so you can take a vacation once in a while, and ideally that person could take over colony management if you become unable able to do so. This team approach will yield the double benefit of reducing stress on you and of ensuring continuity of care in case anything happens to one of you.

Aside from doing TNR, the best thing you can do for a cat colony is to plan for its continuing care both while you are here and when you are gone. Don’t wait until you are not able to take care of your colony to find a substitute or replacement caregiver.

If you are the only caregiver and nobody else knows your colony’s location or size, don’t wait another day to find a caretaker buddy or substitute. “Nobody is going to care for them as well as I do,” you might think, but it is better to find a sincere person who can step in when you are out of town; if you need to move away; or as much as you may not want to think about it, if you are ill, become disabled, or pass away. You’ll feel better knowing that another compassionate person will fill your shoes if necessary.

You may already know people who are familiar with your colony, are trustworthy, and who may be interested in volunteering as substitutes (“feral cat sitters”), caretaking buddies, and/or replacement caretakers. Locate others in your town who are caring for cats or contact your local Trap-Neuter-Return organization. You may be able to find a local organization through various online communities. If you cannot find one, you may want to create a network of like-minded cat caregivers or possibly a grassroots group for your town (for more information, Alley Cat Allies has a comprehensive online Starting Your Own Organization Guide at alleycat.org/StartanOrg).

Follow these steps to find the best person for the job:

1. **Gather all records.** Be sure that all of the cats have been neutered and vaccinated for rabies. Ensure that all of their records are in order. Include photos of each cat and her/his name, behaviors, and friend(s) or others cats he/she is bonded to in the colony. Use the Alley Cat Allies Feral Cat Colony Tracking System, available in the **Resources** section, to help keep organized records.
2. **Locate potential candidates:**
 - a. Check in with neighbors, store owners, friends, and family in the area. But, don’t assume your family or friends will be the best for the job.
 - b. Ask the new property owners (if you are moving).
 - c. Post ads in the newspaper with your name and phone number. DO NOT include the address of the colony or your home address.
 - d. Post flyers around town, send messages to local email lists, and post notices on local online bulletin boards.
 - e. Contact veterinarians and humane organizations in your community to let them

know of your situation. Be sure to tell them that all the cats are neutered and vaccinated.

f. Check with other networks, such as Alley Cat Allies Feral Friends Network, Facebook or Yahoo groups, or listservs. These fellow caregivers and trappers may be able to help or know of someone near you that can. There may be a feral cat network active in your town.

3. **Educate your buddy about your normal feeding schedule and ongoing care.** Once you identify one or more additional caretakers, explain what you do, which could include daily food, water, shelter upkeep, neuter of any new members, and the occasional vet visit. Provide the new caregiver with copies of all medical records (neuter certificates, rabies certificates and tags, microchip information if applicable, and a description and photo of each cat), and be sure to keep a copy for yourself.
4. **Decide on the details of your arrangement.** Ideally, you will recruit one or more regular caretakers and you can create a schedule where you each feed on certain days of the week, or rotate weeks. You need to decide on how to share the monthly costs of caring for the colony together. Or the new caretakers may not be financially capable, in which case you may need to continue to buy the food and make plans to get it to them, and possibly even leave a legacy to ensure the cats will have food if you pass away. What if a cat is injured or sick, will the buddy trap and transport to a veterinarian? Decide in advance which veterinarian(s) are suitable to take a feral cat to and who will be covering the veterinary fees. Most veterinary clinics require payment at the time of services. See the **Working with a Veterinarian** chapter for more information.
5. **Sign an agreement.** Write up a simple agreement stating that you are transferring to or sharing care of the cats with the new caregiver(s). Include specific information about the colony for clear identification. You should all sign and date this document, including both of your addresses and contact information.
6. **Do everything you can to avoid relocating the cats.** Relocating cats is only an option in dire circumstances when the cats' lives are threatened. It is hard on the cats and rarely successful. Familiarize yourself ahead of time with what relocation involves by reading the **Safe Relocation of Feral Cats** section of this book or see the full Alley Cat Allies relocation protocol at alleycat.org/Relocation.

In Case of Emergency

Always carry information about your colony (and your companion animals at home) in your wallet. This will inform emergency workers of what to do in case something happens

to you or a disaster occurs in your town or at your home. Include all contact information for your substitute caregiver, including names and phone numbers. The same kind of “Emergency Contact Card” can go in your car’s glove compartment and to your buddy caregiver(s).

Post the same card on your refrigerator and other prominent places in your home. The information should be noticeable so family or emergency workers will not miss it! The book *PerPETual Care: Who Will Look After Your Pets if You’re Not Around?* by Lisa Rogak offers additional ideas.

Community Relations

Community relations—making yourself available, taking the initiative to communicate, providing first-hand knowledge and expertise on cat behavior, and following through on your promises—can save cats’ lives.

You may need to communicate with your neighbors in a friendly and educational way; you may need to work with them to find resolution to issues or concerns; or you may be facing threats to the cats in your colony requiring more aggressive response or even campaigning. Whatever the goals of your interactions, there are tools available online to help you bring about widespread change in your community, and ensure that it continues to be a safe and happy home for both the cats and the neighbors. Alley Cat Allies offers a comprehensive online Community Relations guide, available at alleycat.org/CommunityRelations. Here is a brief overview of the topics it covers:

1. Educate Your Neighbors



Photo credit: Jason Putsche/Alley Cat Allies

As you perform Trap-Neuter-Return or colony care, or even if you simply care about the welfare of your neighborhood cats, educating your neighbors and community members about the cats will begin a dialogue with them. For one thing, neighbors will know who “speaks for the cats” if a problem arises—and won’t call animal control. For another, you begin to build goodwill toward your work and your cause.

To help you spread the word to your neighbors and community, check out the **Educational Materials** and **Outreach Tools** available for download at alleycat.org and nycferalcat.org.

2. Preventive Measures



Photo credit: Alley Cat Allies

Practicing good community relations is often as easy as following standard feral cat care. These are steps you can take preemptively that may help you avoid potential questions or concerns altogether. And, if you happen to run into concerns from neighbors, there are some easy fixes that may allay their worries.

- **Perform Trap-Neuter-Return** - Neighbors are often bothered by behaviors associated with breeding, such as roaming, fighting, yowling, spraying, and the appearance of new kittens. The TNR program described in the first five chapters of this book will virtually eliminate these behaviors.
- **Install humane deterrents** – Trespassing is one unwanted behavior that TNR does not solve in cats. But there are many safe, low-tech methods to discourage feral cats from hanging out where they are not wanted, like neighbors' gardens, yards, porches, or vehicles. Examples are:
 - Motion-activated sprinklers and ultrasonic deterrents (for example, ScareCrow® and CatStop™)
 - Covering sandboxes when not in use
 - Deer netting over gardens
 - Plastic forks or bamboo chopsticks staked in soil
 - Chicken wire under mulch
 - More ideas are available online (search on “humane feline deterrents”)
- **Follow responsible feeding protocol** – Feed in a consistent, unobtrusive spot so the cats will gather in one area to eat, out of the public view. Providing sheltered and inconspicuous feeding stations can help maintain cleanliness. Feeding stations also make it easier to move the feeding location if that is ever necessary – the cats will recognize and follow it. Keep the cats' feeding stations or areas clean and trash free. Do not put out more food than the cats will finish in one meal, remove what they do not eat after 30 minutes, and clean up the area.
- **Provide shelter** – Providing a shelter for cats means they will not have to go looking in neighbors' crawl spaces, porches, or sheds for a warm, dry place to rest. Cats can also be discouraged from climbing on cars or other private property by gradually moving their shelters away from these areas. Like the location of the feeding station, cats will follow their shelter. Read more about shelters in the **Colony Care – Best Practices** chapter.
- **Provide litter box areas** - To keep cats from using neighborhood gardens as litter boxes, provide one or more litter boxes. Place litter boxes in a shelter such as a large plastic bin with a large door cut in one side to prevent the litter from being ruined by weather. You could also place sand or peat moss in strategic outdoor areas for the cats to use as litter (do not use conventional litter in uncovered areas, as it will be ruined by weather). Be sure that the litter area is in a quiet, sheltered space. Scoop regularly to alleviate odors and keep flies away. Be prepared to scoop more often in hot weather.

- **Maintain colony records.** Though you should take every step to prevent neighbors from calling animal control, you should always be prepared for the possibility. This is why you should always maintain current, accurate health records, including vaccination data and photographs, for all of the cats in your colony. The Alley Cat Allies tracking sheet is available under **Resources**.
- **Protect yourself and the cats.** Use a written agreement to document what you have discussed with neighbors or community members who have concerns. A sample agreement from Alley Cat Allies is in the **Resources** section.

3. Troubleshooting with Community Members

Even with education and preventive measures, you may find yourself facing potential conflicts with neighbors or other local stakeholders. Remember to remain calm and constructive in all of your dealings, and be prepared to list the benefits of and facts about TNR and community cats. Above all, listen to others' concerns and determine exactly what their issue or complaint is, then work toward a mutually agreeable solution. You will give neighbors confidence that you know what you are doing and care about their interests.

Alley Cat Allies' online Community Relations Resource Center has tools to help you resolve issues about cats with a neighbor, community member, or official (alleycat.org/CommunityRelations).

4. Bargaining Chips: How and What Services to Provide to Get What You Want when Negotiating on Behalf of Cats

When you're negotiating on behalf of cats, the first thing to do is recognize that you've got multiple bargaining chips at your disposal—actions you can take, items you can provide, or services you can offer.

If you're hoping for a compromise, it is important for both sides to have things to offer. You can't tell decision or policy makers that they have to make changes if you don't also have some of your own solutions and resources at the ready.

Bargaining chips include:

- **TNR.** It is not only in the best interest of the cats, it is the best method for the community. Trap-Neuter-Return is the linchpin of any successful community program for stray and feral cats. By ensuring the cats are sterilized, you are stabilizing the population (no more kittens), as well as eliminating nuisance

behaviors such as howling, spraying, and fighting; you are making the cats better neighbors. If this is not enough in the eyes of the community, you may consider adding adoption of friendly cats to your TNR program. *Caution:* First be very confident that you can line up foster placement and adoption venues.

- **Colony Care.** By following our advice in the **Colony Care—Best Practices** chapter, you are already making your colony a tidy place that does not attract insects or wildlife, and your winter shelters keep the cats from straying into neighbors' porches or sheds. You may need to consider compromises, such as offering help with deterrents (described in Preventive Measures above) or moving the feeding station gradually to a more agreeable location.
- **Education.** Most people in the community or local government are probably not aware of all the facts about feral and community cats or TNR, and they may harbor dangerous misconceptions. Dispel myths, let them know how people and cats can coexist harmoniously, and tell them what you are doing to make this happen.
- **Address Concerns.** If a few vocal community members are complaining about the cats, offer to address their concerns individually. This will show decision makers that you are willing to work with neighbors to solve an issue while protecting the cats' safety. Some people may want the cats "gone," but most do not want them to be killed, so your efforts will be appreciated. See the Troubleshooting section of the Community Relations Resource Center at alleycat.org/TroubleShooting for more details.
- **Bargaining Chips that Regularly Backfire.** It may seem like a good idea, but by agreeing to find homes for cats, relocate a cat colony, or take them to a sanctuary, you may be taking on an impossible task and put cats at risk. If you agree to get involved in adoptions, you may end up being stuck fostering more cats than you can handle. Relocation and sanctuaries pose two problems: 1) There is no "magic barn" that can house all of the cats people want to relocate; and 2) These approaches are not in the best interests of the cats, and that is really your number one goal. If you do manage to find a suitable new location for a colony, first read the **Guidelines for Safe Relocation of Cats** chapter.

5. Campaign on Behalf of Cats and Connect with Others

Alley Cat Allies' Community Relations center at alleycat.org/CommunityRelations offers excellent tips on how to launch a campaign to proactively bring about change for cats, including how to work with the media. It also shows you how to connect with others or build your own community of support. No colony caregiver should have to handle everything alone, especially when it comes to conflict within the community.

Poison and Other Threats to Cats

While caring for a feral cat colony you may encounter different levels of conflicts or threats to the cats. Ideally, as a caregiver, you can **proactively educate your neighbors**, preemptively foster an open line of communication that will prevent any negative situations from escalating, and **resolve issues with neighbors** even when an issue seems small, so that it the situation doesn't escalate.

Low-key complaints and concerns from the community can be addressed by following the steps described in the previous chapter, **Community Relations**. The Alley Cat Allies online Community Relations Resource Center has more information, including specific pointers on resolving conflict with property management or animal control (alleycat.org/CommunityRelations).

However, there may be times when confrontations or even threats arise. This can seem scary, but there are steps you can take to protect yourself and the cats, prevent further escalation, and resolve most situations.

Poisoning and Violent Threats

In many states and locales, harming, poisoning or killing domestic animals—including feral cats—is a crime. You can check your laws through the ASPCA's website at <http://www.asPCA.org/fight-cruelty/advocacy-center/state-animal-cruelty-laws>, or through your local government or local animal control offices.

When a serious threat of poisoning or violence is made or there is evidence that a cat has died or been injured through foul play, confront this behavior head-on:

- **Help the cat.** If a cat is injured, first trap her and take her to a veterinarian.
- **Call law enforcement** and your local anti-cruelty agency, such as a state or local SPCA or humane society. It is important to gather as much evidence as possible, take pictures, and write down important dates and times.
- **Get a necropsy.** If the cat dies, and you have the means, get a necropsy (an autopsy for animals) performed on the cat in order to find out the cause of death. Most states have a state laboratory that performs post-mortem tests on animals. Costs vary, but may be worthwhile if evidence aids in prosecution of the case. If you cannot get the cat to a state laboratory, a feral-friendly veterinarian may be able to determine a cause of death.
- **Let them know it is a crime.** Post a flyer detailing the laws about animal cruelty and poisoning and the potential sentence for such crimes. The flyer lets the neighborhood (and the potential or alleged poisoner) know that the cats are being

looked after and that others are watching—and that the threatened offense is a crime. A sample poison flyer from Alley Cat Allies is available in the **Resources** section of this book.

- **Find a lawyer** – If the situation has escalated to the point where you want to involve a lawyer, you can consult Alley Cat Allies' factsheet on legal help at alleycat.org/Citations.

If you suspect that someone is threatening your cats or you wish to protect the remaining cats:

- **Be safe.** Never go it alone—don't try to deal with threats or suspicion of intentional harm without a companion or involvement from another party. It is also a good idea to notify law enforcement so there is a record of your actions.
- **Have a conversation, if you can.** If you know who is making the threats, you believe that person can be reasoned with, and you feel that it is safe interacting with the individual, then consider a face-to-face conversation. Approach them with a calm and constructive attitude, as outlined in the Community Relations chapter. The person may have voiced a threat out of frustration and not meant it, or placed a poisonous substance (such as ammonia) on their property not realizing that it can harm cats and not simply deter them. Or they may truly intend to harm the cats but not realize that it is a punishable offense.
- **Educate others.** Threats and harm may come out of simple ignorance. Whether or not you know who is threatening the cats, by educating the neighborhood about humane solutions and anti-cruelty laws, you can clear up any misconceptions that are causing the problem and garnering support in the community. Posting poison flyers will serve as a deterrent to would-be poisoners.
- **Install a video camera** on the premises in order to have documentation of activity at all times of the day. This would not only aid with evidence in future cases, but could also serve as a deterrent for anyone coming onto the property with ill intentions.

Is That Cat Feral?

The term “community cats” encompasses feral cats, cats who have been lost or abandoned, and cats who might receive food and intermittent care from one or more residents in a community. All are domestic cats, but feral cats are those who are not socialized enough to be placed as a typical pet.

Knowing how to tell the difference can be tricky, whether the cat is outside or in a trap, but it can help you know how best to interact with the cat and what outcome may be in the cat’s best interest.

Why does it matter?

- Stray cats can usually readjust to living with people and be adopted as companions.
- Adult feral cats and feral kittens over 8 weeks old are not socialized to people, which means they are not adoptable. As a result, they are likely to be killed if picked up by animal control or brought to shelters, so it is in their best interest to continue living outdoors.
- Stray and feral cats can be difficult to tell apart, especially when they are trapped or frightened. Scared and shy stray cats often need time, at least 3 days, to relax and show their level of socialization.
- Trap-Neuter-Return takes into account each cat’s level of socialization to determine the best outcome for them. Feral and undersocialized cats are returned to their outdoor home after being trapped, neutered, and vaccinated. Socialized cats and young kittens can be adopted into homes.

How Do I Tell the Difference?

The ASPCA has conducted an extensive research study on the behavior of socialized vs. unsocialized cats in a simulated shelter environment over a 3-day period. This research will be helpful to trappers who want to evaluate cats while they are still in traps, recovering from surgery, and may guide a decision whether to return a cat or try to find an adoptive home.

Socialized cats were found to show behaviors like touching your hand or putting their tail up in the air or hanging out in the front of the cage. Yawning, sniffing, rolling, or moving around a bit in the cage were also predominantly seen in more socialized cats. These behaviors are expected by many shelter workers and other cat caretakers.

What was most surprising in the ASPCA's research was how many behaviors the less socialized and more socialized cats had in common.

Behaviors occasionally seen in less socialized, more feral cats:

- Blinking with eye contact
- Meowing
- Licking their lips or nose
- Stretching
- Sniffing

This meant that these behaviors were not unique to more socialized cats and could not be used to say that a cat was definitely social.

Behaviors unique to more socialized cats in a shelter environment:

- Rubbing
- Playing
- Chirping
- Having the tail up
- Being at the front of the cage

While not all more socialized cats showed these behaviors, cats who did were socialized. Assessing the cats throughout the 3-day period was beneficial in eliciting key behaviors from shy and more frightened cats.

The researchers determined two sets of points that the cats could earn based on behaviors that help to identify those much more shy and retiring cats who are still socialized, but not obvious about it. These points were earned by the cat on the second and third morning of their 3-day assessment (if they haven't shown any obvious behaviors to mark them as socialized up to that point). These are behaviors that BOTH more and less socialized cats do.

Some of the behaviors that add points (more points = more socialized with people) are:

- Not eating during the night (yes, the feral cats were more likely to eat during the night while the more socialized cats tended not to)
- Licking lips or nose
- Paying lots of attention to a string toy
- Not making a lot of eye contact (the more socialized cats were more likely to look at things other than the human, while the feral cats kept their eyes on the person)

The ASPCA is in the process of developing a tool based on this research that shelters and caregivers can use to assess cats' level of socialization.

How do I tell the difference when the cats are outdoors?



Since it can be difficult to determine each cat's socialization during a stressful event such as trapping, and you may not be able to hold cats in traps or crates for a 3-day observation period, you may need to observe cats on their own outdoors before trapping, using guidelines developed by Alley Cat Allies. Remember that these guidelines are not hard and fast rules and that just one of these traits is not enough to draw a conclusion.

Bottom line: If a cat you don't know approaches you or if you can touch her, she is most likely not feral. Not all stray cats will do this though, especially at first—each cat will act differently in a variety of situations.

On the other hand, community cats fed by you over a period of weeks or longer may rub against your leg or let you pet them, especially at mealtime. Despite this behavior, these cats may not be socialized enough to be adopted by a stranger -- or by you.

More monitoring using these guidelines may be necessary to determine if the cat is socialized:

STRAY	FERAL
SOCIALIZATION TO HUMANS	
May approach people, houses, porches, or cars	Will not approach and will likely seek hiding places to avoid people
SOCIALIZATION TO OTHER CATS	
Will likely live alone, not be in a group	May belong to a colony
VOCALIZATION	
May be vocal, meow, or "answer" your voice	Unlikely to meow, beg, or purr

STRAY	FERAL
BODY LANGUAGE	
<p>Might walk and move like a housecat, such as walking with tail up—a sign of friendliness</p> 	<p>May crawl, crouch, stay low to the ground, and protect body with tail</p> 
<p>Will probably look at you, blink, or make eye contact</p>	<p>Unlikely to make eye contact</p>
SCHEDULE	
<p>Will be visible primarily during the daytime</p>	<p>More likely to be nocturnal; occasionally out during the day</p>
PREGNANCY, NURSING, KITTENS	
<p>In some areas, many owned cats are intact and it is fairly common for them to escape or be abandoned because of mating-related behaviors</p>	<p>In some areas, many owned cats are intact and it is fairly common for them to escape or be abandoned because of mating-related behaviors</p>

STRAY	FERAL
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE	
Will probably be dirty or disheveled -- cats under stress will often stop grooming. Coping with an unfamiliar environment and having difficulty finding food are extremely stressful to a cat.	<p>Will probably have a clean, well-kept coat (unless ill or injured).</p> <p>Males with a big head, thick neck, muscular body, and/or scars from fighting are feral -- these traits characterize intact males (less than 3% of feral cats in the US are neutered). Other traits: spiky coat from high testosterone levels and less time spent grooming; "stud tail"—hair loss, greasiness, or bumps at the base of the tail due to hormones.</p>
Less likely to have an eartip	Will likely have an eartip if neutered as part of a TNR program

What do I do next?

Once you have evaluated a cat and feel like you have a sense of the cat's level of socialization, the next step is to get the cat neutered and vaccinated. From there, use your judgment to do what's in the cat's best interest, whether it is returning to the original location with an eartip, seeking an adoptive home, or socializing for adoption.

Selective Trapping and Trap-Shy Cats

Selective Trapping

If you are in a position of having to trap a specific cat or cats, you will need to practice selective trapping. Possible scenarios include trapping an injured cat, a pregnant cat, a newcomer to a colony where you already completed TNR, a particularly trap-shy cat, or to complete TNR of your colony.

To trap selectively, you need to have control over when the trap closes. The two basic methods for doing this are using a drop trap or the “bottle and string” approach using a regular box trap. Either method enables you to close the trap only on the selected cat. Since other cats in the colony will probably be attracted to the trap, be prepared to bring extra bait and to be patient until the selected cat walks into the trap.

Using a Drop Trap

Drop traps allow you to catch a cat who is reluctant to enter the confined space of a box trap. They are also useful when trapping one cat out of a group. These traps are generally large, bottomless mesh boxes that, when triggered by you with a rope, fall down over the cat. Note that when using a drop trap, you should always be ready to transfer the cat immediately into a box trap or transfer cage, because a bottomless drop trap is not designed for holding and transporting cats. For this reason, we recommend that you have a helper when using a drop trap. Several companies sell drop traps such as the Tomahawk model shown below. You can also build your own following online instructions from Alley Cat Allies or other TNR websites.



Left: A Tomahawk drop trap is baited, weighed down, and set. Photo credit: ASPCA. Right: How to transfer a cat from a drop trap to a box trap. Align the sliding doors, hold the traps in place, cover the traps completely except for one end of the box trap to trick the cat into thinking the box trap is an escape route, and shut the door once the cat is in the box trap. Photo credit: Urban Cat League

“Bottle-and-String”

It is possible to manually spring the door of a standard box trap. You can do this by propping the trap door up with a liter soda bottle or a piece of wood and tying a pull string to it. The trip plate is not engaged when the door is held open in this way, but you should place the bait in the usual spot behind the trip plate so that the closing door will not injure the cat.

When the cat you want fully enters, simply pull the string to remove the bottle and close the trap. Be sure to tie the string securely to the bottle and pull it taut or tie it off so the string will not move. This also allows you pull the string to close the trap quickly and without distracting the cat.



Bottle-and-string setup. Photo credit: ASPCA



Key ring/nail setup. Photo credits: ASPCA

Another version of the same technique (pictured above, right) uses a key ring and a nail tied to a string to hold the door open; pulling the nail out of the key ring will close the door. Whichever method you use to hold the door open, be sure to keep the string taut and practice first before trapping.

Tips for Successfully Trapping Trap-Shy Cats

Trap-shy or trap-savvy cats may call for some special techniques in addition to a selective trapping approach. Cats may be frightened to go near or enter a trap, or may have mastered the art of removing food without triggering the trap. Don't be discouraged. There are several unique but straightforward techniques to humanely trap hard-to-trap-cats.



Photo Credit: Alley Cat Allies

- **Get the cats used to eating out of the trap.** This works best in an area where it is secure enough to leave a trap safely unattended. Feed the hard-to-trap cat and others in unset traps for about a week or more before trapping. Feed the cats in the same place and time as always. Secure the trap door open with a cable tie or other fastener to ensure that no cat is accidentally trapped. Place the food in the rear of the trap behind the trip plate. If the cat will not enter the trap to eat in the rear, start by placing the food by the entrance of the trap, then inside, then over a period of days gradually move it closer to the back. Feed in the same place and time as always. If you are not able to leave the traps unattended, monitor the traps while the cats eat to ensure traps are not stolen, then remove the traps after the cats eat. The cat will see other cats eating inside the traps and will likely try it as well. When you are ready to trap, the specific cat you want will probably go right into the trap with no fear. Training the cats in this way works with the bottle-and-string approach for selective trapping or as preparation for mass trapping.
- **Try using a larger size trap.** Some cats may be more comfortable entering a larger trap designed for feral cats – these have a taller opening and wider sides than the rabbit/cat size traps.
- **Make the trap more enticing.** Consider using the following smelly treats as bait, and be prepared to try different kinds of bait until you find one that works:
 - Catnip
 - Valerian root powder
 - “People tuna” in oil, mackerel, canned cat food, sardines, or cooked chicken.

Especially in cold weather, an extremely smelly bait will get the best results.

- **Use distraction techniques to help coax the cat onto the trigger plate.** You may be able to guide some cats into a trap with a laser pointer. You can use a pointer from quite a distance away, too. Another distraction technique is to hang a piece of cooked chicken from a string above the trigger plate. The cat will likely need to step on the trigger to reach the chicken.

- **Place the trap in a more secluded location or camouflage the trap.** Moving the trap to a quieter or more protected location can raise the cat's comfort level enough to enter. Or, you can try to blend the trap in with its surroundings. First, hide the trap under a bush, under a leaning piece of wood, or in a box so the cat feels like he is entering a dark hole. To further disguise the trap, cover it with branches, leaves, camouflage material, burlap or other natural materials. Even simply covering the trap with dark cloth or a towel can do the trick. Be sure that the coverings you use do not interfere with the trap door closing.
- **Withhold food for up to two days.** For a particularly trap-savvy cat, you might consider withholding food for up to two days. Water should always be provided.
- **Take a break from trapping.** If a cat will not go into a trap after repeated attempts, take a break for a week or two (except in the case of an injured cat). The trap-shy cat needs to be reconditioned to not be afraid to go in the trap. It is important to stop trapping until you have trapped the trap-shy cat. Continuing will most likely result in the cat becoming increasingly reluctant.

Kitten Guide

What to Do When You Find Kittens Outdoors

You've got a decision to make. Your first instinct when you see kittens may be to scoop them up and take them home with you, but that is not always in the best interest of the kittens—or you. Socializing and caring for feral kittens is a time-consuming process which requires devotion, patience, and attention. The decision to bring feral kittens into your home should not be taken lightly.

Some kittens may need intervention if they are not doing well. Remember that early weaning of kittens who seem to be doing well may lead to increased mortality or failure to thrive. Although kittens begin weaning prior to eight weeks of age, if it's safe they should remain with their mother until then to learn proper behavior.

Ultimately, you have to use your own judgment depending on the kitten's circumstances and your time and resources. The best way to help all of the cats in the colony is to perform Trap-Neuter-Return and not spend all your time socializing kittens.

Before you move forward, consider:

1. **Time:** Do you have the time it takes to socialize kittens? You will have to commit to caring for them one-on-one for at least a couple of hours each day, for a period of a few weeks to a month or longer. If the kittens are neonatal, they will require even more specialized care, including round-the clock bottle-feeding. Make sure you know ahead of time what this entails. Sadly, people often bring feral kittens into their home and then do not take the time to work with them. Weeks, or months, later, they realize that they cannot touch the cat—they have feral cats in their home who cannot be adopted.
2. **Adoption Expertise and Connections:** After socializing the kittens, they will need adoptive homes. Do you have the network—friends, acquaintances, organizations—to help you find those homes? Finding and screening homes for kittens takes work. Consider the paperwork required—adoption fees, forms, and contracts—as well as your ability to get the kittens neutered before adoption when deciding whether to socialize them or not.

**Note: We recommend early-age spay/neuter. A kitten can be neutered as long as he or she weighs two pounds.*

3. **Kitten Age:** Healthy kittens 2 months of age or older can stay in their colony, and we do not recommend attempting to socialize kittens older than this. Older kittens should be neutered, vaccinated, and returned to their outdoor home.

Determining a kitten's age can be difficult. Kittens develop at their own speed based on environmental and genetic factors. Observing physical signs, such as how open their eyes are and their weight, as well as behaviors, like when kittens begin venturing from their mother or using a litter box, will help. The photos and descriptions below can help you gauge the age of kittens with an unknown birth date.

Kitten Progression At-A-Glance

- *Under one week:* (3-8 oz) Eyes are shut, ears are folded down, and kittens are unable to walk. They can purr and make tiny noises. The umbilical cord may still be visible.
- *One-two weeks:* (8-11 oz) Eyes start to open (they are blue) and focus. Ears begin to open and movement is improved to crawling, snuggling, and kneading.
- *Three weeks:* (7.5-14.5 oz) Eyes fully open and ears are open and standing up. The kitten will start to respond to noises and movement. The first wobbly steps are taken and baby teeth start to come in.
- *Four-five weeks:* (8-16.75 oz) Running, playing, digging, and pouncing occur often. Kittens will start to wean and will be able to lap up formula, eat soft food, and use the litter box by themselves. Eyes have fully changed from blue to their adult color.
- *Eight weeks:* (2 lbs) Kittens look like little versions of full grown cats.













Kitten Progression Week-By-Week

1 day old			
Eyes closed, can not stand. Ears folded.			

<p>3 days old</p> <p>Eyes closed, can not stand. Ears starting to unfold.</p>			
<p>6 days old</p> <p>Eyes starting to open. Beginning to crawl.</p>			
<p>1 week old</p> <p>Eyes almost completely open.</p>			
<p>8 days old</p> <p>Becoming aware.</p>			

<p>9 days old</p> <p>Beginning to venture away from mama.</p>			
<p>10 days old</p> <p>Looking very alert. Closed eye on kitten #1 is from eye discharge.</p>			
<p>12 days old</p> <p>Mama has moved kittens. Kittens are now able to walk, although wobbly.</p>			
<p>13 days old</p>			

<p>14 days old</p> <p>2 weeks.</p>			
<p>15 days old</p>			
<p>16 days old</p>			
<p>20 days old</p> <p>Using litter box.</p>			

<p>21 days old</p> <p>3 weeks.</p>			
<p>22 days old</p>			
<p>23 days old</p> <p>You can see that kitten #3 is going to be a med-long hair, and #2 med hair.</p>			
<p>28 days old</p> <p>4 weeks.</p>			

31 days old			
32 days old			
35 days old 5 weeks.			
37 days old			

40 days old			
42 days old 6 weeks.			
45 days old			
47 days old			

<p>50 days old</p> <p>7 weeks.</p>			
<p>54 days old</p>			
<p>54 days old</p>			
<p>56 days old</p> <p>8 weeks.</p>			

57 days old			
60 days old			
62 days old			
63 days old 9 weeks.			

70 days old			
75 days old 10 weeks.			

Photo credit: Jamie Nichols/Alley Cat Allies

Trapping Kittens and Moms

Attempting to trap a mother cat and her kittens, and deciding what to do with them once they've been trapped, present some special challenges.

This section covers:

- The various scenarios you may encounter when planning to trap a mother cat and kittens;
- How to trap a family of mother and kittens; and
- Trapping safety tips for kittens.

In order to do what's best for kittens, you **MUST** know how old they are. Refer to the kitten progression photos in the **Kitten Guide** chapter for help in determining a kitten's age. Here are a few guidelines to remember:

- The best place for kittens younger than 6-8 weeks old is with their mother, if at all possible.
- The ideal window for socializing kittens is when they are 8 weeks or younger. Older kittens can be trapped, neutered, and returned.

Common Scenarios You Might Encounter

- If you find kittens who are alone, determine if the mother has abandoned them or if she is just off looking for food. The only way to find this out is to wait. Often times, she will return within a few hours. Observe from a distance or a hidden spot to be sure she is not returning before moving the kittens. Use common sense and be patient.
- If the mother cat doesn't come back after several hours, and you think she has abandoned the kittens or they are in danger, you can choose to raise them yourself. Do not take this decision lightly. You will need to determine if the kittens require neonatal kitten care (1 day to 4 weeks old), if the kittens are young enough to be socialized, fostered or adopted (6 to 8 weeks old), or if they are at the age to be trapped, neutered, and returned (older than 8 weeks or larger than 2 pounds).
- If the mother cat does return for her kittens, you have multiple options to consider:
 - If the mother is feral and the kittens are too young to be separated from her, the best thing for the family is to leave them where they are for now as long as the location is safe. (Use your judgment and common sense—if you think

the location is safe enough for the mother to survive, leave the kittens with her; if not, see next bullet point.) Remember, the mother is best able to care for her kittens. Provide food, water, and shelter. Monitor the family daily and make the environment as safe for them as you can. If you have decided you don't have the time or the resources to foster, socialize, and adopt out the kittens, then you can trap, neuter, and return the whole family when the kittens are 8 weeks old or two pounds. If you can foster, socialize, and adopt out the kittens, the ideal window is when the kitten are between 6 weeks and 8 weeks old. The best thing for the mother cat is to be trapped, spayed, and returned to her outdoor home.

- If the kittens are too young to be separated, and you believe it is safer for the whole family to come indoors—you can trap the mom, trap or scoop up the kittens depending on their age, and bring the whole family inside to a quiet, small room like a bathroom or in a cat condo, where they can live until the kittens are weaned and it is safe to get them all neutered. Then you can decide what is best for the kittens and either return mom outside if she is feral or find her an adoptive home if she is fully socialized. Learn how to tell the difference between socialized (stray) cats and feral cats in the **Is That Cat Feral?** chapter.
- If **the mother is feral and the kittens are old enough to be separated from her**, you have a decision to make: commit to foster, socialize, and adopt out the kittens, or trap, neuter, and return the kittens when they are 8 weeks or two pounds.
- **If you trap a cat and discover that she is a nursing mother**, get her spayed immediately and return her to the area where you trapped her as soon as she is clear-eyed that evening, with approval from the veterinarian. Many times, you only learn this after she is at the clinic—make sure the clinic knows your plans for returning nursing mothers as soon as possible; they may have an anesthesia protocol that will enable her to wake up from surgery more quickly.

You can also check a trapped cat for signs that she is lactating (enlarged nipples), then bring her to the veterinarian as soon as possible. Be sure the clinic knows that the cat is lactating or possibly lactating. Check for signs of nursing preferably before you line the trap with newspaper. Prop the trap up on sawhorses or between two tables, and visually check for enlarged nipples, which sometimes protrude from the fur.



This lactating mother was recently spayed; the enlarged nipples are clearly visible where the fur was shaved. Photo credit: Urban Cat League

It may seem counterintuitive to separate a nursing mother from her kittens, but it's difficult to trap her again—this may be your only real chance to spay her and prevent further litters. Try to find the kittens (following the mother after you return her) so that you can trap and neuter them when they are old enough. The kittens will begin to appear at the feeding station with their mom at about 6 weeks of age. *Note: Nursing mother cats continue to produce milk after being spayed, and can continue to nurse their kittens. Their maternal instinct will most likely overcome any discomfort from spaying, and they will resume care of their kittens.*

This situation can be harrowing for a caretaker, especially if the mom was caught a few days before the spay date. However, even young kittens have been known to recover after being without their mother for as long as 4 days. If you can find where the kittens are hidden, and you have the space, you may choose to hold onto the mother and set her up with the kittens in a pen to watch over them all. This can be done without spaying the mother or even if she was spayed before you realized she was lactating.

We recommend spaying the mother before you return her outside, whether or not you decide to bring the kittens inside with her. If you let her go unspayed, you may never have a chance to catch her again and stop future litters.

- **If you discover at the clinic that you have brought in a pregnant cat**, have her spayed by an experienced veterinarian who has performed this surgery before. It may be necessary to allow an extra day for recovery and extended observation. For many people, this is a difficult aspect of Trap-Neuter-Return, but as with nursing mothers or any cat in a trap, it may be difficult to trap her again—this is your opportunity to protect her from the health risks and ongoing stresses of mating and pregnancy.

Once you have a plan and understand the different scenarios you may encounter, you are ready to start trapping.

Always Trap Feral Kittens, Never Chase or Grab Them!

Chasing down feral kittens and grabbing them is always a bad idea, even when successful. The stress and anxiety for the kittens can take weeks for them to overcome. Their instinct may convince the kittens that the person chasing them is set upon eating them. When that same person tries to pet them, and hold them, and nurture them, the kittens may be even more traumatized.

Trapping removes a human presence from the terrifying experience of being separated from their mother and the life they know. The human can then actually take a positive role when we offer food and reunite them with their siblings. The less the kittens associate humans with their trauma, the faster we can gain their trust and tame them for adoption.

Trapping Technique

Preparation

Here is an ideal scenario for a successful trapping of mom and kittens:

Before starting any trapping, get the mom and kittens to eat for several days from a trap that is secured open with a cable-tie or other fastener, as discussed in the chapter on **Selective Trapping and Hard-To-Trap Cats**. The objective is to make sure that even the shyest kittens and mom are not afraid to go into the trap *before* you start trapping. Normally, moms trot out their litters to the feeding station at about 6 weeks old. If you observed when the mom got skinny (after delivering her litter), you can set up the trap (tied open) about 6 weeks later and start “training” mom to go into it even before she brings the kittens along too. Nursing moms are extremely hungry and sometimes, it is only when she is nursing that you can hope to trap a very wary female.

This works best in an area where it is secure enough to leave a trap safely unattended. Feed the mom and kittens in the same place and time as always. Place the food in the rear of the trap behind the trip plate. If at first the mom will not enter the trap to eat in the rear, start by placing the food by the entrance of the trap, then inside, then over a period of days gradually move it closer to the back. If you are not able to leave the traps unattended, monitor the traps while the cats eat to ensure traps are not stolen, then remove the traps afterward.

You probably won't see all the kittens the first day or two. There are usually a couple of very shy ones who won't dare to follow mom the first day or two. Once mom and *all* the kittens have been seen going into the trap to eat without hesitation, *only then* are you ready to start the trapping project

Trapping the Family

Try to trap mom first and get her safely out of the picture with no kitten witnesses. Moms usually leave the den in mid-afternoon to look for food while the litter is still sleeping. This is the perfect time to set the trap for her and whisk her away to a basement, garage, or bathroom for holding, after covering the trap with a sheet to keep her as calm as possible. Make sure your vet is willing to spay a lactating female. Most vets experienced with feral cats will do it without a problem. After 6 weeks, mom is ready to start weaning the kittens and she can be spayed safely after this point. Getting mom spayed should be a priority and not forgotten just because there are kittens to deal with.

You can trap mom in the conventional way, setting the trip plate, but with the kittens, use the bottle and string technique described in the **Selective Trapping and Hard-to-Trap Cats** chapter. This way you can be sure a second or third kitten is not in the way of the door or gets caught when the door comes down. You may even get lucky and get two or three kittens at a time as they crowd into the back of the trap around the dish of food.

Get the shyest kittens first. Do not rush and trap the first and bravest kittens to go into the trap. Learn how many there are before you start trapping and keep track of which ones are the last to come to the party. Late afternoon near dusk is the usual time for kittens to leave the den and come to the feeding station where you've trained them to go into the trap without hesitation. The shy ones will be traumatized if they witness the brave ones getting trapped. When you start to trap the kittens, let the brave ones eat and go if necessary to wait for the shy ones. You'll always get another chance with the brave ones. The shy ones are the smart ones and they won't give you a second chance for some time if you blow it the first time. They are used to mom being away for periods of time without worrying so don't worry about that. Wait until the shyest one, or hopefully two, are in the trap eating together to pull the string for the first time. Even if a couple of the braver ones witness this, they'll come back soon enough but not vice versa. The shyer/smarter ones will hightail it back to the den and not come out for a day or more if they witness the trapping of the braver ones, or if half their family mysteriously disappears. Get them first and you'll be done with everyone in short order. Even if the brave ones have eaten and gone, they won't hesitate to come back the next day and eagerly load into the trap. Don't be in a hurry. Wait until you get the shy one(s) first, with no other shy witnesses, if at all possible.



When mom isn't trapped first and won't go near the trap, the bottle and string are necessary because putting another trap inside a trap renders the trip plate unusable. Hopefully the kitten will call out to mom. For the photo, the trap is out in the open, but trapping may work better in a secluded area or with the end of the trap covered so mom will need to go into the trap to approach the kitten. Photo credit: Urban Cat League



Mom can be used as bait if the kittens won't come out to be trapped. Photo credit: Urban Cat League

Despite your best efforts, you may find that you have trapped all except the shyest kitten and she won't go near the trap now. In that case, put mom or another kitten sibling in a trap and put that trap inside a larger trap or under a drop trap. (A small cat or squirrel trap fits inside the bigger raccoon or feral cat traps.) The kitten will often come out to see the mom and can be trapped in a regular trap using the bottle and string or with the drop trap.

If the reverse happens and you do not trap the mom first, you can use one of the kittens to lure mom into a drop trap or into a conventional box trap using the bottle-and-string method.

Six weeks old is old enough for kittens to be separated from their mom. Start the kittens right away with socialization for adoption, and TNR mom and return her for continued outdoor care. Don't forget to have her eartipped!

Kitten Socialization

Please refer to the **Kitten Guide** section of this book for guidelines on how to decide whether to take kittens in, care for them, and socialize them.

Kittens under 8 weeks of age can usually be socialized without much difficulty following the guidelines detailed below. Kittens over 8 weeks of age who've had no positive interaction with humans often take much longer to socialize. However, using the guidelines below you can successfully socialize kittens – and often shy adult cats! While these techniques are usually successful, there is always a risk that the cat might not respond as well or as quickly as you might like so always take into account that you might need a contingency plan in place. In attempting to socialize an older kitten or cat, we recommend starting with a 2-week trial period – if the cat isn't making progress by then, it's best to spay, eartip, and return her to the colony immediately, before it becomes unfamiliar to her.

Location

The best places to socialize kittens are anywhere where the socializer can get on the same level and comfortably interact with the kittens without the kittens feeling towered over, "backed into a corner," or hiding out of reach. Many large-dog kennels are roomy enough for the socializer to sit inside and have the added advantage of more frequent exposure to typical human activity if placed in a busy room of the house. Most bathrooms work very well although they are isolated from continual household activity. A small room without hiding spots under couches and beds or behind furniture can also work very well. Radio and television sounds can contribute to getting outdoor ferals accustomed to the indoor environment.

The double-decker wire catteries on wheels can work very well to start socialization but at some point you must let the kittens out in a confined space where they can choose to approach you. They can be wheeled into a small room to be let out for hands on work or wheeled back into the living area for exposure to general activity between socialization sessions. Try to choose the setup which gives the kittens the best exposure to you and household activity.

Small cages or carriers don't work well since the cats always feel cornered when we reach in and they have no room to make the important "mind shift" where THEY choose to approach US out of self-interest in order to get the food they desire. They need to have the option NOT to be near you in order to make that decision to approach. We have some limited equipment information on our website where to obtain traps, handling gloves and socialization pens.

Cats socialize themselves by choice. We only provide the incentive... *food!*

Food is the most important tool to facilitate the socialization process. Growing kittens have an insatiable appetite which will give them the courage to approach you and be touched when they might normally never allow you anywhere near them. Never put food down and walk away. It removes their incentive to welcome you into their world. No free rides!

The following guidelines are not hard, fast rules. You may find that the kittens skip to advanced stages very quickly or you may find they follow a sequence of their own design.

- 1. Evaluation.** If the kittens are healthy, using the litter box, and will eat in front of you, you can safely begin delaying meals just enough to give you the advantage of hunger. (If not, you may decide to give them a "free ride" until this situation stabilizes. Once they seem calmer or the vet gives the OK, you may begin the "tough love" stage of socialization where you space out the meals so that the kittens are eager to learn.)
- 2. Tough Love.** Never put food down and walk away. If the kittens will eat in your presence, progressively pull the dish as close to you as possible. Stay with the kittens until they have finished eating and then take any remaining food away with you when you leave. Always leave water of course, but *no food* unless you are there with them.
- 3. Eating off your finger.** When the kittens have progressed to eating from a dish right beside you with your hand touching the dish, start offering something tasty off your finger. Gerber or Beechnut baby foods are favorites in turkey, chicken or beef flavors (with no rice or vegetables).



Photo credit: Urban Cat League

You may want to try this in place of step 2 if they won't move close to you to eat from the dish. The order is of no importance as long as they are improving on some level. Be flexible but don't let them hold you hostage at the stage of their choice. "Get tough" and make them work for it. Until they realize the baby food's consistency, they may want to gulp bites before they learn to lick it. Let them learn to lick from a spoon, popsicle stick, or tongue depressor if at first they want to chew your finger instead of lick it. They figure out to lick not bite quickly, but in the meantime, ouch! Your hand reaching close to them, without them retreating in fear is the lesson they are learning through hand feeding.

4. **Lead them onto your lap.** Once they are used to eating off your finger, use that to lead them up into contact with your body by their choice. You can also try putting a dish in your lap and let the entire litter climb up onto you to eat. The braver ones will start and the shy ones may need to be worked with individually at their level. Lead the braver ones as close as possible and see if they will make eye contact with you while licking from your finger. That's a biggie for them! Put the fast learners in a carrier to work with the shier ones. Put a dish inside and close the door on them, if they aren't quite ready to be picked up easily.
5. **Initiate contact.** Initiate contact at the beginning of a session where the kittens are particularly hungry and eagerly engrossed in eating. Start with them eating from a dish or while eating off the finger and eventually progress to touching them and petting while they are in your lap eating. Start in the head and shoulder area only. If he runs off, lure him back with baby food on the finger and any bad experience should be soon forgotten. (This approach to handle mistakes works at any stage. Back up to a stage that they've mastered and work back up to where they "freaked out." Don't stop the session until they've forgotten the bad experience and are happily doing one of the steps with which they feel comfortable.)
6. **Preparation for lifting.** Expand petting and touching around the head and shoulders by moving to touching the underbelly to desensitize them for being picked up. Also try nudging them from one side to the other while they are engrossed in eating. Just having your hands near them and gently pushing them around is an important preparation to being picked up.
7. **Moving on the ground.** Set up two dishes and gently lift/scoot a kitten the short distance from one dish to the other, very close to the ground. If the kitten is engrossed in eating she won't mind being lifted if it goes smoothly and quickly. If not, lure her back, back up, and start over.
8. **Picking them up.** Start sitting on the floor so the first real lift is still close to the floor from their point of view. Have a full jar of baby food opened and ready before you try the first pick-up. Try it when they are engrossed in eating right next to you

rather than scrambling after them on the run. Lift them under their chest with a small dish of food *right in front of their nose* the whole time. Hold them as loosely as possible onto your knees and eventually to your chest. Young kittens are often reassured if they feel the warmth of your body and can feel your heart beat when held against your chest. If it works you can try it up onto your knees the next day and eventually standing up. Make sure they are very comfortable with the small lifts before you ever bend down from towering above them and picking them up fully standing. When you can do that, you're home free!

9. Handling without food. After a good long session where the kitten(s) are very full and getting sleepy, try gentle petting and work up to holding and petting without the incentive of food being present. If this works you should be able to try it at other times between meals. It may be hardest just before feeding when the kittens are very hungry and confused and stressed by being held when they have only food on their minds. There's usually at least one "love bug" in every litter who will give you hope for the others.

10. Transition to adoption. Before putting them in a cage in an adoption center, test them with a few different socializers. If the volunteers at the adoption center can continue the baby food training there is often a smooth transition. Older and especially shy kittens do better when they go directly to an adoption and bypass the adoption center altogether. A crash course in socializing for the adopting family may be needed to assure that the transition to the home goes well. If the adopter starts them in the bathroom rather than turning the kittens loose to the run of the house, it will assure that they can bond with the kittens and that the kittens will know where the litter box is. If not the kittens often run off under the couch to hide for the foreseeable future. Give them a copy of this guide so they can understand what they kittens have accomplished and how they can continue the progress.

Interactive Play

Most feral kittens are frightened by interactive play when first exposed to humans. There is no rule for when to introduce it, or when they will accept it, but the best way to start is with a toy that isn't too threatening. A string on the end of a stick or some toy that allows you to entice them from a distance, allows them to get involved with your game without being face to face with you. Some people have found that interactive play was the breakthrough activity much more so than using food. Be flexible to discover what breaks the ice best and branch out from that. Use whatever proves to be their favorite thing as a reward for new steps or to break through a plateau. Once a step has been mastered, only offer regular food as a reward for that step saving the favorite treat for breaking into new territory. Remember the mantra, "Tough Love."

Guidelines for Safe Relocation of Cats

Relocating a feral cat or colony of feral cats should be avoided at all costs, and only viewed as a last resort. Unless the cats' lives are threatened, the optimal place for them is where they currently live.

Cats are territorial animals and form strong bonds with the location they inhabit. A food source exists in the area and the cats are acclimated to local conditions. Relocating feral cats is a difficult, time-consuming, and challenging undertaking.

A far better course of action is to resolve, if possible, the problems that are forcing the cats out of their established home. Many solutions exist for common complaints stemming from cat behavior. Read about how to help the cats be good neighbors in the **Community Relations** chapter.

Only after you have exhausted all possibilities should you consider relocation. Moving a colony of feral cats—and convincing them to stay—is a complex process involving specific procedures, starting with finding a suitable new habitat or location, that must be followed without shortcuts if you want the cats to remain at the relocation site.

1. **Assess the colony.** Feral cats develop strong bonds with one another as well as with their established homes. When looking for a new location, try to find one that can take all of the cats. If this is not possible, cats with strong bonds to each other should be moved together. Cats will adjust to their new homes better and the move will be less traumatic if they have the security of one or more trusted companions.

Kittens and cats that are friendly to humans can be adopted into good homes, or sterilized and relocated with the rest of the colony depending on your available resources. Read the Alley Cat Allies Socialized Cat Guide, including adoption techniques, at alleycat.org.

2. **Find a new home for the cats.** The colony's new home should be in a climate that they can adjust to easily. Do not move southern cats up north where they won't be used to the cold winters. The new home should be away from heavily trafficked areas, include shelter from inclement weather, and come with a new caregiver who understands the responsibilities of feeding, sheltering, and caring for the cats.



Photo credit: Alley Cat Allies

Barns, horse stables, and country homes with lots of land often make excellent homes for feral cats. Other options include a backyard or alley. Ask everyone you know for leads on locations, and place notices or flyers in local newspapers and veterinarian offices, pet stores, coffee shops, hardware stores, feed mills, and farm supply depots. Place ads online for your area on Craigslist or in Yahoo Groups. You may find it useful to use the sample Barn Cat Flyer available at www.alleycat.org.

When you find a promising location, inspect the area carefully and talk to the prospective caregiver at length. Ensure that the new caregiver will provide daily food, water, and monitoring. Consider developing an adoption contract in which the new caregiver will commit to providing basic needs, including veterinary care, and to having any new cats who appear in the colony spayed or neutered and vaccinated.

Some things to consider:

- Avoid relocating near busy roads.
- Ensure that the cats are properly introduced to the property's other animals. Dogs must be introduced slowly so the cats will not become frightened or be chased away. Cats and horses frequently get along well, once the cats adjust to a horse's size.
- Take into account wildlife in the area. Raccoons, foxes, and opossums typically get along with adult cats in their own fashion. Kittens, however, are at risk because they can be prey. Coyotes will prey on both cats and kittens. In areas with coyotes, the cats stand a better chance if they have access to a shed or similar structure with several small openings that they can run in for safety. You may also consider building a fenced area for the cats -- find directions at www.alleycat.org.

3. Relocate the Cats.

- Trap the cats and safely transport them immediately, in covered traps, to their new home.
- Upon arrival at the new location, the cats must be confined in pre-installed large cages, such as a cat condo, for 3-4 weeks. Confinement allows the cats to adjust to the environment in safety and to accept it as their new home. If set free upon arrival, all cats will attempt to return to their former home and will likely become lost.
- Alert the new caregiver that during the first day or two, the cats may try to find a way out. Most cats settle down in the cage when they realize that no harm will befall them.
- While the cats are confined, they must have clean water, fresh food, and clean (or scooped) litter at least once, preferably twice, each day. Feeding cats canned food during confinement appears to help them accept their new home. The cats can then be fed dry food upon release; it is up to the new caregiver.

Details to keep in mind:

- Be skeptical if you are told the new location is escape-proof. Always install cages for the confinement period to ensure that the cats remain in their new home.
- Do not confine for longer than 4 weeks, or the cats may be traumatized and the relocation project will be jeopardized.
- If a cat escapes from the enclosure, the caregiver should set food and water out. This will encourage the escapee to stay close. The new caregiver should sprinkle that particular cat's used litter (specifically feces) around the location. Since cats have a keen sense of smell, this will help lure the cat back to its territory. Cats often hide for a period of time, but usually stay on or near the premises.

4. Follow up. Plan to call or visit the new caregiver regularly to ensure that the cats are well cared for. You may be able to provide valuable support or advice. They may also serve as a contact for future relocations.

If you have relocated an entire colony, try to completely remove the food sources in the old location to discourage a new colony of feral cats from forming. But remember, because the original colony has been removed, new unsterilized cats are likely to move in.

An Alley Cat Allies survey of caregivers revealed that relocations were most likely to succeed when four main steps were followed:

- Several cats from the same colony were relocated together.
- Cats were confined in adequate climate for 2 to 4 weeks (Alley Cat Allies recommends 4 weeks) in large cages inside sheds, barns, basements, or escape-proof shelters.
- Cats were fed canned food every day for 2 to 6 weeks, then got dry food.
- The new caregiver made frequent (minimum twice daily) verbal attempts to bond with the cats.

Resources

Where to Buy Traps and Special Equipment

Listing these companies here does not in any way imply an endorsement by Alley Cat Allies, the ASPCA, or the Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals, nor are these organizations responsible for the content of the websites or the utility of the equipment.

Tru Catch Box Traps, Dividers, Feral Cat Recovery Cages, and Accessories:

Tru Catch Trap/Manufacturing Systems, Inc.
300 Industrial St. PO Box 816
Belle Fourche, SD 57717-0816
Phone: 800.247.6132 or 650.892.2717
Website: www.trucatchtraps.com

Tomahawk Box Traps, Dividers, Drop Traps, Transfer Cages, Feral Cat Dens, and Accessories:

Tomahawk Live Trap Co.
P.O. Box 325
Tomahawk, Wisconsin 54487
Phone: 800.272.8727 or 715.453.3550
Fax: 715.453.4326
Website: www.Livetrapp.com

Sample Forms and Literature

On the following pages you will find the Alley Cat Allies Colony Tracking System form to help you keep organized colony records; also brochures, door hangers and flyers that you may freely reproduce. More literature and other resources are available at www.alleycat.org, www.aspcapro.org, and www.nycferalcat.org.

For a downloadable version of the Alley Cat Allies Colony Tracking System form, visit <http://www.alleycat.org/document.doc?id=45>.



Caregiving Information Alley Cat Allies

Tools: Community Cat Colony Tracking System

This form will enable you to identify and track the individual community cats (also known as feral cats) in your colony and chart the progress of your Trap-Neuter-Return effort. Use the Trap-Neuter-Return procedures as recommended on www.alleycat.org/TNR.

Caregiver Information: (Use the back of this sheet to list any additional caregivers)

Name: _____
Cell Phone: _____ Other (Home or Work): _____
Email: _____
Street Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ ZIP code: _____

Colony Information:

Name of colony: _____ Name of location: _____
Street Address: _____
Cross Street: _____
City: _____ State: _____ ZIP code: _____
Year colony originally formed (if known): _____

Setting: ☐ Alley ☐ Offices ☐ Apartment ☐ Residential ☐ Rear of address ☐ Park ☐ Industrial
☐ Other, describe: _____

Date current Trap-Neuter-Return plan was implemented: _____

Total number of cats in colony after Trap-Neuter-Return is completed: _____

Adult male: _____ Number of kittens fostered/adopted: _____
Adult female: _____ Number of adult cats fostered/adopted: _____
Kittens: _____ Number of cats euthanized: _____
Number of cats remaining in colony: _____

Trapper Information: (if different)

Name: _____
Cell Phone: _____ Other (Home or Work): _____
Email: _____
Street Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ ZIP code: _____

Has catch and kill or relocation been attempted with this colony in the past?

☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Catch and kill ☐ Attempt to relocate Year attempted: _____

Veterinarian or clinic performing medical care:

Name of Veterinarian: _____ Name of Clinic: _____
Phone: _____ Email: _____
Street Address: _____ State: _____ ZIP code: _____
City: _____

Are all the cats in the colony eartipped on the left ear? (right ear in California)

☐ Yes ☐ No If no, why? _____

Definitions:

Adopted/Fostered: Brought into a human home.

Relocated: Moved from one outdoor setting to another in order to avoid imminent death. To be avoided at all costs/viewed as a last resort.

Euthanized: Humane euthanasia administered by a veterinarian only when an animal is hopelessly sick or untreatably injured.

Eartipped: Tip of the left ear removed indicating cats have been neutered and vaccinated.

Additional Caregiver Information:

Name: _____
Cell Phone: _____ Other (Home or Work): _____
Email: _____
Street Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ ZIP code: _____

Additional Caregiver Information:

Name: _____
Cell Phone: _____ Other (Home or Work): _____
Email: _____
Street Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ ZIP code: _____

Additional Notes:

Additional Trapper Information:

Name: _____
Cell Phone: _____ Other (Home or Work): _____
Email: _____
Street Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ ZIP code: _____

Additional Trapper Information:

Name: _____
Cell Phone: _____ Other (Home or Work): _____
Email: _____
Street Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ ZIP code: _____

Name of Cat	Color Markings	Hair Length (DSH/DLH)	Sex M/F	Age (For kittens, include # of weeks*)	Date Trapped	Name of Trapper(s)	Surgery N=Neuter S=Spay	Eartip = ✓ (left ear)	Vaccines R=Rabies Tag Number D=Distemper	Parasites F=Flea Treatment D=Dewormed	Microchip Brand	Microchip ID Number	Notes on Outcome R=Returned A=Adopted/Fostered E=Euthanized O=Other	Notes on General Health F+=FIV Positive O=Other (explain)	Labeled Photo Attached = ✓
1															
2															
3															
4															
5															
6															
7															
8															
9															
10															

*Note: Alley Cat Allies does not recommend attempting to socialize adult feral cats or kittens older than four months of age. Kittens who are at least 8 weeks or who weigh two pounds can be simply trapped, neutered, and returned to their colony.

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11																
12																
13																
14																
15																
16																
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18																
19																
20																

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TRAP NUMBER:	Date trapped:	Physical description:
	Location:	

The medical team should check the following on this cat:

PRINT, THEN CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE



Feeding A Stray?

If you are feeding the local outdoor cats,
Thanks! for being a good neighbor!

Learn about **FREE**
Trap-Neuter-Return for Stray & Feral Cats

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) decreases stray & feral cat populations without harming the cats.

The cats are trapped with humane traps & taken to a veterinarian to be neutered and vaccinated.

The vet will also "ear-tip" them.

An eartip is the universal symbol of a neutered feral cat.

We need your help to feed and care for the cats when they are returned home.

Neutered cats make better neighbors: less yowling, fighting, "spraying" by tomcats, and NO MORE LITTERS of kittens!

If you feed the cats, want to help, or just learn more, email us at info@NYCFeralCat.org or call: 212-330-0033.



Mayor's Alliance
for NYC's Animals

The NYC Feral Cat Initiative is a program of the Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals.

NYCFeralCat.org



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Illustrator: Chris Pallace

For more information, please contact the
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Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals®
AnimalAllianceNYC.org



POISONING CATS IS AGAINST THE LAW

Intentionally harming, maiming, or killing an animal is cruelty. Violation of anti-cruelty laws—including poisoning—is punished with prison time and/or a hefty fine.



LOCAL HUMANE ENFORCEMENT

LOCAL SPAY/NEUTER OR TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN ASSISTANCE

Provided by:



WWW.ALLEYCAT.ORG