



Humanely Trapping, Transporting and Returning Feral Cats

As a Colony Caretaker, you already have demonstrated your compassion by providing food, water and shelter to feral cats in your community. Now you are taking the next responsible step – trapping, sterilizing and returning the cats to their colony site. While trapping and transporting ferals may seem intimidating, the following steps should help make your efforts successful while minimizing risk for the cats. You might also check the Alley Cat Allies Web site, www.alleycat.org, for more detailed suggestions.

Before You Trap:

To ensure you are only trapping your own colony cats, make sure you inform neighbors that you are going to be starting TNR at your colony site. If your colony site is on someone else's property, make sure you inform the property owners and have their consent.

If you haven't already gotten your colony cats used to a regular feeding schedule, it's a good idea to start doing so at least a few days before you trap. Usually, it will make trapping easier if you get the cats accustomed to seeing you and to getting food from you around dusk, since dusk is an ideal trap-setting time. Because of our extreme weather conditions, food (and, eventually, traps) should be placed in safe, protected areas such as under a porch or a tree. **Check the weather forecast before setting traps, as live traps can easily become death traps if cats are caught in them during a monsoon or amidst our high summer temperatures.** Also, plan ahead for the cats' post-surgical recovery. Since the cats will need to stay in the traps overnight for recovery on the day of surgery (you will release them the day after surgery in most cases), you will need a safe place to put the traps – but also a place that will be easy to disinfect. A well-protected porch or garage may be ideal for cats to recover within their traps. Lastly, to make sure the cats will be hungry enough to walk into the traps for food, **you should withhold food from them for 8 – 12 hours prior to trap-setting.**

Supplies Checklist:

- Traps – one trap for every three cats is a good ration
- A few pop-top cans of strong-smelling cat food like tuna or mackerel to entice the cats
- Tarp or other protective covering to line the area of your vehicle (car seat, truck bed) where you'll be placing the cats for their transportation to the spay / neuter clinic
- A large towel or cloth to cover the top and sides of each trap
- Small plates or napkins for the cat food 'bait'
- Spoon
- Hand sanitizer and gloves for your safety
- Flashlight if trapping at dusk or at night
- That little part of your brain that helps you "Think Like a Cat!"

PROCEDURES FOR TRAPPING FERAL CATS HUMANELY

• Trapping Times

TNR trap-setting should be done around dusk; no trap should be left sitting out after 7 am. **Cats can die of heat stroke very quickly in our desert environment.**

• Setting the Traps

Humane traps such as the Tomahawk and others recommended by Alley Cat Allies are safest. Make sure to test and prepare the traps before setting them out. Set each trap on the ground and check the trapping mechanism to make sure it's working. Place one tablespoon of bait (strong-smelling canned cat food) in a small bowl or on a paper napkin and put it in the very back of the trap. You need to make sure the cat will have to walk over the trip plate to get to the food.

Quietly set each prepared trap at the trapping site, preferably near the cats' usual feeding area. A shady, protected area is ideal; cats feel safer near trees, bushes and covered areas than in wide-open spaces. Be careful not to place traps next to dumpsters, cars, or other unsafe locations. Also, make sure the ground on which you are placing each trap is even and that the trap is stable. In most cases, you'll be setting multiple traps. Stagger them and place them so that they're facing in different directions.

After you've set the traps, cover each with a towel. The towel should leave only the trap entrance uncovered. Cats are unlikely to approach the traps if they notice you standing nearby, so leave the area.

The trapping itself can take some time. We recommend waiting 30 minutes and taking any cats trapped in that time frame and moving them to a safe location (e.g., a covered porch or garage) until you can take them to the clinic. If any cats remain untrapped, leave the trap(s) overnight and check and remove them early the following morning. **Due to our extreme climate, it is unsafe and inhumane to set or leave traps out from 7 am to dusk! Also, do not set any traps during a monsoon or when a storm is expected.**

Before moving a trap, make sure it is sprung and the cat is securely trapped. If you approach a trap too soon, you'll scare the cat away and make the cat trap-savvy. Once you have finished your trapping, you will need to put the trapped cats in your vehicle for transportation to the clinic. Make sure each trap remains covered so as to minimize stress for the cat. It is normal for a cat to thrash around inside the trap. It is also normal for the cat to urinate or defecate in the process. Don't give in to the temptation to set them free! Remember, a little stress for the ferals now is going to save them lots of hardship in the long run. For your safety and their protection, refrain from directly handling or touching the cats. Just be as gentle as you can and keep the traps covered. Put the traps alongside each other in the area of your vehicle that you have lined with a tarp or other protective sheet. **Never put traps one on top of the other and never put them in your trunk!**

• Returning The Cats To Their Colony Site

After you pick up your cat from the clinic, you will need to leave the cat to recover from surgery in the covered trap. A porch or garage is usually a safe area for the cat to spend the night recovering in the trap post-surgery. The cat will be fine inside the trap and should not be handled or touched directly. The morning after recovery, you should return the cat to the same place he/she was trapped and release him/her as follows: Open the trap door, uncover the trap, step away and wait a few minutes. It may take the cat a little while to get 'reoriented' and feel safe enough to exit the trap. The occasional 'scaredy cat' may need a little coaxing. Please don't touch the cat. Move the trap gently with your foot or with your protected hands and step away again.

Thank you for helping our community by reducing the pet overpopulation crisis in Southern Arizona.

Mission Statement: Acting with compassion and responsible stewardship through innovative programs that serve pets and the people who love them.