

Trapping Cats Humanely

Trapping can be a scary and potentially injurious time for cats. With a little knowledge and planning you can make the process easier and safer for both you and the cats!

It is best to attempt a mass trapping, catching all of the cats in your colony in just one or two days. This process can seem daunting, but in the long run this attempt has many benefits:

- If the colony is being a nuisance to the area, a mass TNR can resolve many of the issues (noise, smell, fighting, etc.) in a very small amount of time.
- The process involves many resources (traps, recovery space, transport, etc.). Mass trapping means all of this coordination can be done once.
- When trapping cats a few at a time it can be very difficult to keep track of which cats you have trapped. With mass trapping, individual identification becomes less important, as the more difficult cats will become increasingly hungry as days go on and will become more likely to enter a trap.



Prep Work

Preparing for a mass trapping involves many moving parts. Often the planning is much more difficult than the days spent trapping.

Establish a feeding pattern

For a few weeks, feed the cats in the same place at the same time, every day. Once the cats have learned when food is provided, they will begin to show up reliably.

Logistics

Ensure you have identified and secured all of the resources you will need: traps for the whole colony (plus extras!), food for bait, towels or sheets to cover the traps, transport to the clinic, spay/neuter appointments scheduled, and a recovery space large enough to hold all of the traps.

Withhold food

Cats can be naturally wary of traps. Many need to be motivated by hunger to enter. It is essential that food is withheld the day before trapping begins. Continue to provide fresh water daily.



The Trapping Process

Plan for at least two days for a mass trapping, three if you have 10 or more cats.

Prepare the traps

Set up all your traps a safe distance from the colony. Check that all are functional, then bait them with a smelly treat.

Set the traps

Place all the traps in the colony's territory along well travelled pathways, in common gathering areas, and where you normally provide food. Ensure no traps are out in the open, but rather are against a wall or have a branch camouflaging them. Drop a trail of treats or tuna juice leading to the entrance of each trap.

Monitor

Remain close enough to keep an eye on all traps, but not so close that they would be too scared to approach. Never leave traps unattended.

Upon catching

When a cat activates a trap they will likely be very frightened and may begin thrashing around. Quickly cover the trap entirely with a sheet to calm them, or use a cage divider to reduce the amount of space available to them if the sheet does not work.

Reset trap

Move the trapped cat to safe location, and then move a different trap to that spot (some spots attract more cats than others).

Keep at it

Continue baiting and monitoring the traps until you have caught all of the cats in the colony, or the cats are ready to return from TNR.

After Trapping

Once you have trapped the cat, your job is to ensure the cat's environment is as low stress as possible and to ensure they recuperate so they can be reintroduced to their environment.

Keep in trap

Once a cat has been trapped, the trap will serve as his cage until it is time for TNR. Many fearful cats feel safest in small, dark spaces.

Recovery after surgery

Cats should be monitored for post-surgical complications in an appropriate recovery area for between 24-72 hours. Spay scars on females should be checked to ensure there is no excessive bleeding or redness at the end of this holding period.

Release in same area

Return the cats to the same location you found them, and continue to provide care as before.



Special Considerations for Trapping Kittens

Often, kittens are not heavy enough to trigger traps intended for adults. When attempting to trap kittens, prop up the door to an adult sized trap with a water bottle with a string attached, and then lay in wait. Once the kittens enter the trap, close the door manually by pulling the string to remove the bottle. Alternatively, you use traps designed for smaller sized creatures, such as Tru-Catch 24 or Tomahawk 104. Then, bait the trap with smelly food like you would for adults.

If you have already caught the mother or other kittens from the litter, you can use them as bait as well. They may prove a more powerful motivator than the food! To do this, place the trap containing the mother or other kittens against a wall, and place an active trap butted up against the one with their family member in it (with the door to the trap facing away). Then, cover both traps (except the open trap door) with a sheet or some towels (and some branches for camouflage, if available). This way, if the free kitten wants to access their family members for comfort, the only way they can is by entering the active kitten trap.



This information has been adapted from Neighbourhood Cats and Alley Cat Allies. For more information visit:

<https://www.neighborhoodcats.org/how-to-tnr/trapping/trapping-the-basics>

<https://www.alleycat.org/community-cat-care/safely-trapping-kittens/>

