



BETTERTOGETHER
ANIMAL ALLIANCE

BEST PRACTICES FOR TRAPPING A COMMUNITY CAT



People all over the country, from all walks of life, care for outdoor cats every day. Like them, you have discovered cats in your community, and you want to help them. The millions of cats who make their homes outdoors are called community cats. You may also hear them called feral cats, though not all unowned, outdoor cats are feral.

Community cats are domestic cats—the same species as pet cats, *Felis Catus*. The difference is that community cats are unowned and generally not socialized to people, so they cannot be adopted. But community cats are not homeless. They have a home: the outdoors.

The best way you can help community cats is through Trap Neuter Return (TNR). TNR ensures no new kittens are born, stabilizes cat populations, provides vaccines, and improves cats' lives.

Here we will provide you with information that will help you safely and successfully trap community cats.

Establish a feeding schedule.

- To get the cats used to coming out and eating, establish a set time and place to feed the cats every day. Make sure there are feeding stations that are also conducive

locations for trapping. They should be in an area free of human traffic and inconspicuous.

- Tip: To make trapping for TNR easier, put food inside of unset traps for one to two weeks prior to the trapping day. If the trap has a back door, take it off completely or secure the trap door up with zip ties etc. This will get the cats comfortable with seeing and walking into traps. If you are using the traps as feeding stations, do not put food anywhere else but inside the trap.
- Kittens: Kittens can be safely spayed or neutered as long as they weigh at least 2 pounds. Kittens should not have food withheld before surgery. While in the trap, please continue to provide food and water to all kittens weighing under 5 pounds.

Make an appointment with BTAA.

- It is important to have a confirmed appointment with BTAA prior to trapping.
 - The number of appointments made should equal the number of cats planning to be trapped.

Things to know before setting your trap.

- Kittens: Healthy kittens under 2 pounds have a mother and she is probably not far away, even if she cannot be seen. The best place for kittens is with their mother, so leave them be until kittens are 2 + pounds and ready to be spayed or neutered.
- Nursing Mothers: If you have trapped a cat and realize she is a nursing mother, that is ok. Bring the mother in to be spayed and then return her as soon as possible, the same day. She will return to her kittens and be able to continue nursing.
- Pregnant Cats: If a cat is pregnant, she can still be spayed.
- Ill or Injured Cats: Cats who appear to be sick or injured should still be brought in for assessment. The BTAA veterinary team will determine what the next steps should be for the cat based on physical exam.

Set up and prepare for trapping.

- Do all your setup and preparation away from the colony site.
- Withhold food 24 hours before trapping. This will ensure that the cats are hungry enough to go into the traps. Remind other caregivers and neighbors to withhold food as well.
- Run a test to make sure the trip plate is functioning properly before you bait the trap.
- Place about 1 to 2 tablespoons of bait at the very back of the trap so the cat must step on the trip plate to reach the food. Use a small plate or bowl and drizzle some juice from the bait in a zigzag pattern along the trap floor toward the entrance.
- Place the traps on level ground at the colony site, ideally where the cats are used to being fed. Cats will not enter unstable or wobbly traps.
- Cover the trap and leave only about 1/4 of the front of the trap exposed. If cats are not going into traps, try removing the cover.
- Set the trap and leave the area.

Trapped cats.

- Once a cat is trapped, calmly approach the trap. Do not open the trap or touch the cat, even if it looks like they are hurting themselves. Cats can thrash around after being trapped. They are scared and it is completely normal. Covering the trap will calm them down almost immediately.

Transport the cat to BTAA.

- Put cardboard, peewee pads or a thick layer of towels beneath the traps while transporting. Keep cats covered at all times.

Post-Surgery.

- Ideally cats will be allowed to recover for up to 24 hours in their traps prior to being rereleased.
 - The exception to this is with a nursing mother. At minimum, cats should be given to the end of surgery day to recover in their traps and then released.
- Keep trapped cats in a climate-controlled and quiet area.
- Keep traps covered. This reduces stress and ensures safety.
- Feed kittens under 6 months old shortly after picking them up.
- As a rule, the sooner a cat is returned to their outdoor home, the better. Confinement is extremely stressful for community cats.
- Return the cats to the same location where you trapped them.
 - Be careful to keep your distance and keep your fingers and hands as far from the cat as possible when opening the trap. Sometimes it can take a cat a moment to realize where they are. Once they get their bearings, they will exit and run off.

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