

1. CALL THE VET to find out WHICH DAYS they can take the animal for surgery. Trap only as many cats at one time as the vet's office allows. If you want to trap more than one animal at a time, make sure the vet will TAKE more than one at a time BEFORE you trap them. Generally, once a cat is trapped, they will not allow themselves to be trapped again.
2. Ask about any presurgical instructions\*, pickup and drop off times, and any other services that may not be covered.

\*If the colony is fed on a regular basis, you may withhold food for one day before trapping, but it isn't necessary. If they fend for themselves, don't worry about when they have eaten. Trapping in LATE EVENING helps minimize risk of aspiration during surgery (choking from regurgitation of ingested food into the lungs while under anesthesia). Ideally, cats shouldn't have anything to eat or drink after 9pm the night before the surgery; however, we know oftentimes controlling when and what they eat isn't possible. Just remember there is that risk.

3. SET only HUMANE TRAPS according to the surgical dates the vet has given you.

Do not set a trap where trapped animals will be exposed to extreme heat, cold, rain, rising water, or potential danger from other animals (INCLUDING insects such as ants—especially FIRE ANTS which can be lethal), humans, or vehicles. Avoid setting a trap where loud noises may scare a trapped animal. Set trap in/near bushes, tall grasses or anywhere they have been seen to frequent. Vary the trapping locations if you're getting no bites on the bait.

Bait traps with yummy, smelly food (sardines, tuna, and fish-flavored cat food) placed on a disposable surface (plastic lid, small paper plate, etc.—no glass or cans with sharp edges).

Some cats are wary of the "odd-feeling" of wires beneath their feet when they enter the trap. Try a sheet of folded newspaper laid over the entire length of the trap. If no one takes the bait, leave it out the next go-round. Newspaper does cushion their feet, but they will also most likely shred it to bits which is OK. If cats urinate or defecate on the newspaper, they may end up lying in the waste, but NEVER stick your hand inside and try to remove the soiled paper! If you use newspaper and it's soiled, ask the vet to remove it when they can do so safely.

To cover or not to cover. Some folks slightly cover the SET TRAP on the top and/or the longest sides or simply cover  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the entire trap; some leave it completely open when they SET the trap. Some cats will go in a covered trap; some won't but you won't know which way is preferred until you try catching the cats. Anchor the cover with clothespins if it's windy or tuck the cover under the sides of the trap to help secure it. Leave enough open space to observe the inside of the trap. NOTE: some cats may not go into the trap if they feel enclosed by the cover. In that case, try covering only the top of the trap, which isn't as obvious, or nothing at all. DO NOT use any cover that can shred, cause a problem if bits are eaten, or blown away before you can check the trap

If it's HOT outside, cover the trap with a lightweight cloth (cotton/sheet) and leave the front and back of the trap open to allow for airflow and keep in a shady/cool place. REMEMBER: Cats can't perspire to keep cool and can easily die of heatstroke.

If it's VERY COLD, use a heavier cloth (like a blanket) and drape it on all sides, front and back.

In wet weather, some have used a plastic table cloth or shower curtain cut to size on TOP of the regular cover to keep the cat dry. That isn't necessary as feral cats are used to being wet but it does make it easier for you to transport the cat in a dry trap with a dry cover (if the cover is wet, remove it and put a dry one on once you're home or before you transport the cat to the vet). Whatever you use, make sure there is enough ventilation for the cat to breathe comfortably especially in very hot, humid weather.

Regardless of whether or not you cover the set trap, you **MUST** cover the trap **ONCE THE CAT IS TRAPPED!** A trapped feral cat is panicky and extremely stressed. Oftentimes they will trash about and can injure themselves trying to get out as they feel very exposed. Covering them as quickly as possible after being trapped (so they can't see out) makes them feel safer. This is why some people partially cover the set trap—it offers some sense of security until the trapper can get back to the trap and cover the trap completely.

Check traps every hour or more often if possible. Daylight is best for trapping, but if you have to trap at night, bring a flashlight. **IMPORTANT:** Trapped cats must **NEVER BE LEFT UNPROTECTED** from snakes, fire ants, other predators, etc. **REMEMBER: cats are sitting ducks in that trap and can't get out of harm's way!** Do not leave trapped animals in traps at the trapping site any longer than you have to. Don't leave them outside overnight. Cats stress very easily and you do not want them to be left alone in a trap where they feel threatened or where they can sustain injury from other animals. They can also hyperventilate and/or die of a heart attack if the stress is severe. If you trap another kind of animal (opossum, raccoon), simply release them and reset the trap if you have time.

A shed, barn, garage, porch, etc., would be a good place to house them overnight and upon return for recovery. (You may want to elevate the trap slightly (bricks/2x4's) and put newspaper/plastic underneath so if cat urinates/defecates, he isn't sitting in excrement and your porch/shed floor is protected. Make sure the trap isn't elevated any higher than a couple of inches in case the trap tips over. You don't want the cat to be injured if a trap falls over.)

4. Once trapped, check the ear-tips to see if one has been clipped. If so, the animal has already been sterilized. Release and reset the trap if you have time. If neither ear is clipped, cover the trap and take the cat to the vet as **SOON AS POSSIBLE**. It's important to keep trapped cats COVERED even during transport to/from the vet. Cats stress very easily and keeping them covered helps them feel safe.

If you're trapping in the evening and the vet's office is closed for the day, take the animal home, put it in your garage, barn, shed, basement, bathroom or other safe, environmentally controlled area for the night—somewhere that isn't too hot or too cold but it doesn't have to be heated or air conditioned. Elevate the trap a few inches (just to clear the floor) on something stable (like bricks, 2x4s, or cinder blocks) making sure it cannot tip over if the cat thrashes about. Put some plastic (garbage bag, old shower curtain, vinyl table cloth, etc.) on the floor around and under the trap, top it with some newspaper (for absorbency) to catch any urine or feces. You may (carefully) offer food and water, but remove it not later than 8:00pm if you're taking the cat to the vet the next morning. (If you're going straight to the vet, don't offer any food/water.) Note: If you intend to bring the cat into your house, make sure you use a bathroom/laundry room that can be disinfected (with Clorox) afterward and your other animals do **NOT** come in contact with the feral cat or the room until it is disinfected.

5. Transporting to the vet. Ferals **MUST** be presented to the vet in traps. **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD YOU transfer a feral cat to a carrier when taking it in for surgery.** Vets may refuse them if they're presented in carriers. However, most vets require that the anesthetized/recovering cat be placed on soft, warm bedding for the cat's trip home. Please bring either a **CARRIER** lined with a clean towel/linen **OR**, if you don't have a carrier, bring something soft **TO PUT** into the trap so the cat can rest comfortably while it recovers overnight.

Don't forget to put down some plastic then some newspaper in your vehicle before placing the trap inside. You might want to carry a trash bag to put any soiled newspaper/towels into until you can dispose of it properly. Remember: **YOU'RE** breathing that same air! Also, secure the trap so it doesn't slide as you drive. Traps should always be placed inside the vehicle. Do **NOT** transport traps in closed trunks or open truck beds. Avoid playing very loud music while transporting the cat—a calm ride is best for both of you!

At the vet's office: Tell the vet if you notice anything unusual that may need medical attention. Also, be aware that if an animal is severely injured or sick beyond reasonable hope of either recovery or having a decent quality of life back at the colony, the vet may recommend euthanizing the animal.

6. If you bring in a trapped cat without an appointment or a certificate, you will have to either (1) take the cat home, release it, reschedule the appointment and try to retrap it, or (2) pay for the spay/neuter yourself
7. Going Home: After picking up the newly sterilized cat, it will need a quiet, safe place to recover for the night. This place can be the same place you kept it the night before, but make especially sure it's not too cold. The cat's body temperature will be lower after surgery and the cold prevents proper and quick metabolism of the anesthesia as well as promote illness. You want kitty to recover quickly in a warm place. Once the trap is set up in the recovery area, offer a small amount of food and water. Don't worry if he doesn't eat it. He still may be too stressed to eat.
8. The Release: Providing the cat is alert the next morning, remove food and water, and then return the cat to the place where you trapped it. Release it. If it is not alert, call the vet.
9. Last Step: Disinfect used traps (with steam or Clorox) before trapping again to prevent spread of any disease or parasites and to prevent "stress smells" on the trap. Start the process over again or return the traps to CHTA by the due date.
10. NEVER KEEP THE CAT IN THE TRAP more than 36 hours; i.e., the evening he was trapped, the next day (surgery), and then the next morning when he is released. Cats may not eat, urinate or defecate while trapped. Since cats dehydrate easily, they can die quickly under these stressful conditions.

Disclaimer: The vet has the right to refuse surgery if, in the vet's opinion, the animal is not old enough, healthy enough, or for any other reasons the vet deems surgery to be contraindicated. Your acceptance of the spay/neuter certificate releases the vet and/or Brunswick Animal League from any liability, including but not limited to, any inconvenience, monetary loss on your part, complications from surgery, or the death of the animal.