

# Trapping Feral Cats

## Preparation for Feral Cat Trapping

Get the feral cats used to being fed at the same place each day. Don't feed the feral cats the day or night before you are going to trap so the feral cats will be hungry. Plan to trap so that you don't have to keep the feral cat too long before surgery. Trapping the night before is usually the best approach. Feral cats should not eat 12 hours prior to surgery. Cover the trap with a towel or blanket to keep the feral cat calmer during transport. Feral cats can hurt themselves if the cat trap is not darkened with the feral cat inside.

Prepare the area where you will be holding the feral cat before and after the veterinarian clinic visit. It's best to leave the feral cat in the cat trap in a garage or other sheltered, weather protected area. You can use pieces of wood to elevate the feral cat trap and then slide newspapers under the cat trap to catch the waste. This allows the waste to fall through the wire away from the feral cat. You do not want to take cat with waste all over it to the vet's office.

If young kittens are involved, remember that the kittens are weaned at 4-5 weeks of age. If you are trapping a lactating female, you may want to wait until you have located all the kittens and they are weaned and eating soft foods. If you wish to foster the kittens to adopt out, they should be taken from the mother at 4-5 weeks. If you wait until the kittens are older than 4-5 weeks before trying to tame them you will find the job much harder as they get each day older.

## Setting the Feral Cat Traps

Plan to set up the Feral cat traps one (1) hour before the cat's normal feeding time. Or, dusk is usually the best time to set up cat traps.

Don't trap in the rain or the heat of day without adequate protection for the trapped feral cat. Cats are vulnerable in the traps and could suffer from heatstroke in the sun. Think about the safety of the feral cat first and for most.

Fold a piece of newspaper to line the bottom of the cat trap just covering the trip plate. Feral cats don't like walking on the wire surface and the paper helps to keep their feet from going through when you pick up the trap. Be sure that the paper does not extend beyond the cat trap trip plate. Too much newspaper could interfere with the trap plate and prevent the door from closing fully and locking.

Place the feral cat traps on a level surface in the area where the cats usually feed or have been seen. Feral cats are less likely to enter the cat trap if it wobbles. If trapping in a public area, try to place the cat traps where they will not be noticed by passersby (who may not understand that you are not trying to harm the feral cats). Bushes are often places where feral cats hide and provide good camouflage for the trap.

Use very smelly food to bait the feral cat trap. We find that canned sardines are very effective and you can use the juice in the can to make a trail leading to the trap. Feral cats will follow this trail to the entry of the cat trap. It is best not to put anything inside the cat trap to hold the bait since the feral cat can easily hurt itself on it in a panic.

After baiting the feral cat trap, open the trap door. There is a small hook attached to the right side of the top of the cat trap. The hook holds the door in an open position which also raises the trip plate. When the feral cat steps on the plate it will cause the hook to release the door, closing the cat trap. After setting the feral cat trap, cover it with a large towel. Fold the towel at the front end of the trap to expose the opening while still covering the top, sides and back of the trap. The cover will help to camouflage the trap and serve to calm the feral cat after it is caught.

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## **Waiting for Trapping Success**

Never leave the feral cat traps unattended in an unprotected area, but don't hang around within sight of the feral cat (or you will scare it off). Passersby may release the feral cat or steal the cat trap! Wait quietly in an area where you can still see the cat traps without disturbing the cats. Check the cat traps every 30 minutes or so. You can often hear the cat traps trip. As soon as the feral cat is trapped completely cover the trap and remove the cat trap from the area if other cats are not in sight. You may consider putting another cat trap in the same spot. Often cats will run in small groups.

When you get the captured feral cat to a quiet area away from the other cat traps lift the cover to check that the trapped cat is not someone's pet or previously neutered feral cat. (The FCC marks the right ear of every animal they alter so we can avoid taking a altered feral cat to the vet's office). If you have trapped a lactating female check the area for kittens. Please remember that this female must be released 10-12 hours after surgery so she can care for and nurse her kittens (if you did not find them).

## **Feral Cat Holding Procedures**

After you have finished trapping, you will probably have to hold the feral cats overnight until you can take them to the vet. Place feral cats in a weather protected area. DO NOT feed them. You can place a small bowl of water in the cat trap by opening the cat trap rear sliding door just a couple of inches. An empty cat food or tuna can works well. Don't open the door too wide or the cat may escape. (Be sure to remove the bowl before transporting the cat to the vet. Keep feral cats covered and check periodically. They will be very quiet as long as they are covered. You must remember that these are wild animals which scratch and bite.

## **Releasing the Feral Cat**

If a feral cat does not seem to be recovering well from the surgery, have it re-checked by a vet before releasing. When feral cats are ready for release, return to the area in which they were captured and release them there. Do not relocate the animal! It will be disoriented and area cats will drive it away.

If the veterinarian has indicated a serious medical problem with the cat which you will not be able to treat, you, with the advice of the vet, must make the decision on whether it is safe to release the animal or kinder to euthanize it. Untreated abscesses and respiratory infections could mean suffering and a slow death.

Make sure the spot you pick for release does not encourage the feral cat to run into danger to get away from you. Keep the cat trap covered until you are ready to release the cat. When ready, simply side the rear door up with the trap rear door facing away from you. The cat will probably run immediately out of the cat trap.

After releasing the cat hose off the cat trap and disinfect them with bleach. Never store traps in the "set" position (door open); animals may wander into unbaited traps and starve to death.