Community Cat Management Course

~

Trapping Protocol

2014
General Trapping and Release Instructions for Caregivers

Before you trap

It is easier to trap a cat that is used to coming to a certain site for food at a regular time. If the cats are not used to a routine, it will be much harder to trap them. Try to feed the cats according to a routine as far in advance of trapping as possible.

Prepare a warm, sheltered area for holding the cats before surgery. Garages or well-ventilated sheds work well. Place newspapers on the floor to catch urine, stool, and food that will fall from the trap. Bricks or other convenient items can be used to elevate the traps off the ground so that the cats are not sitting in their waste. It may be necessary to spray the area with cat-safe flea or ant spray to keep insects away from the cats. Also, you should place a plastic liner in your vehicle for the cages to sit on. This will keep urine from damaging your car while traveling to and from the trap site and clinic. Be sure to place absorbent towels on top of the plastic to soak up any messes. The towels will contain it and the plastic will prevent it from leaking through into the carpet or upholstery.

Be sure to contact other people around the area where you intend to trap so that everyone in the area understands what you are trying to do and neighbors can keep their pets confined. Stop feeding the cats two nights before you begin trapping so that the cats will be hungry. Inform anyone else that might be feeding the cats to stop feeding, too.

Setting the traps

Begin trapping up to two nights before the surgery clinic at your established feeding area. Open the traps at dusk then close them at dawn. Traps should never remain open during the day due to the heat. Also, do not trap in the rain. Find a good location to put the trap. It should be hidden from view so that it will not be noticed by a passerby who might disturb the trapping. Bushes are often places where cats hide and provide good camouflage for the trap. The trap should be placed on level ground. Cats are unlikely to enter a trap if it wobbles. Check to make sure the back door of the trap is correctly latched. Open the front door of the trap by pushing the top of the door in and pulling the bottom of the door out. Latch the hook on the top of the trap to the small metal cylinder on the door. This will keep the door open and raise the trip plate. The trap should be baited with smelly food such as canned mackerel or the dry cat food they are used to eating. Place a small trail of food leading from the opening of the trap to the back. Then put a larger amount of food in one of the bowls tied to the back of the trap. Cover the trap with a large towel such that the sides and back are covered. The cover helps to keep the cat calm in the trap and provides camouflage. Any trapped cat must remain covered throughout all trapping, transporting, and holding. Always wear thick gloves when handling or transporting any animal in the trap. **Be sure the trap is covered when you bring the cat to the surgery clinic!**

Picking up the traps

Don’t wait around to see if a cat enters the trap. Your presence will make the cats wary and scare them off. Check the traps once every few hours during the evening and again very early in the morning. Be sure to close the traps during the day for the safety of the animal and reopen them at night. **Never reach into the trap with any caged animal or you risk serious injury.** Cover the trap completely, make sure the back door is secure, and carry the trap to the holding location. If you capture a pet cat wearing a collar, a previously neutered cat (ear-tipped) or a wild animal (such as an opossum), wearing thick gloves (heavy leather gloves work best), carefully open the back door of the trap, stand back at a safe distance, and allow the animal to leave. If you note that you have captured a nursing mother cat, check the area for kittens and remember this female should be released as soon as possible after surgery so she can care for and nurse her kittens if necessary.

Holding procedures

Place the traps in the prepared area. Keep them covered. If it is more than 1 day before the surgery clinic, sprinkle dry food from the top of the cage into the food bowl and pour a small amount of water into the other bowl. If less than 1 day, just give water. Check the cats periodically and change dirty newspaper as needed. The cats will likely stay calm and quiet as long as the traps are covered. Be sure they do not get overheated or too cold and that they have adequate air ventilation. After transfer of cats to the surgery clinic, change all newspaper in the holding area before cats are returned so they have a clean area to recover from their surgery.
Recovery
The cats will be picked up the same day as their surgery. They may still be recovering from anesthesia. Normal behaviors include head bobbing, wobbly movements, fast breathing, shivering, and deep sleep. Keep the cats warm and covered. Monitor them periodically. They should not be bleeding from the surgery area. Bleeding from the left ear crop is expected but should stop before release the next day.

Release
If the cats are fully awake the next day, they can be released in the same location from which they were trapped. Relocating cats is rarely successful. They will either be driven off by territorial cats or other animals or follow their natural instinct to return home. To release the cat, point the back of the trap away from danger, such as a busy street. Take off the cover, safely unlock the back door, and lift the door away from the trap. Stand back and patiently allow the cat to leave at its own pace. Usually it will run away immediately.

Helpful Hints
• Never put your hands near the trap without wearing gloves. Never reach inside the trap with a caged animal. If you are bitten or scratched, contact your doctor immediately. If your doctor is unavailable, contact your local law enforcement agency. All cat bites and scratches must be reported to the Public Health Department as soon as possible. Do not release the cat!
• Bring a flashlight and a friend to check the traps at night.
• Bring a spoon for your bait. The smell of fish doesn’t wash off your hands easily.
• Lactating queens should be spayed and released as soon as possible after surgery.
• Females with kittens are attracted to the sound of their kittens. Placing a trap next to the trapped kittens will encourage the mother to enter. Likewise, kittens will be attracted to a trap set next to their trapped mother.
• Typical feeding schedule for trapping for a Sunday surgery appointment:
  • Wednesday and Thursday – don’t feed cats you are going to trap
  • Friday and Saturday – set traps according to instructions.
  • Saturday morning – Take trapped cats to holding location. Give small amount of food and water to trapped cats. Close empty traps for the day.
  • Saturday evening – Open/reset traps according to instructions. Previously trapped cats should not be fed, but can receive a small amount of water.
  • Sunday morning – Check traps a final time, close and pick up all empty traps. *Be sure to leave food out at usual locations when you pick up your traps on Sunday morning.*

Special Precautions
ALL ANIMAL BITES ARE SERIOUS! IF YOU ARE BITTEN, SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION, AND DO NOT RELEASE THE CAT. The cat must be quarantined. Contact your veterinarian for quarantine advice. Cat bites and scratches are extremely painful and dangerous, and may require hospitalization to treat serious infection.
Community Cat Management Course Trapping Protocol

Trap Team Responsibilities

- All team members meet for a formal orientation and to pick up their assigned traps, trapping pack, assignments and OC Caregiver Release forms. Each member should receive a pair of thick gloves.

- Teams set out to their assigned trap locations to set traps. Teams set traps and check cats in and out according to the instructions provided herein.
  - Every team member must PERSONALLY SEE and RECORD each individual trap location.
  - Team members will discuss the trapping schedule and decide who will be responsible for checking the traps at the times set forth in these instructions.
  - All team members will exchange telephone numbers.
  - In the event of bad weather, the team leader will be sure traps are closed either by alerting team members or by doing it personally.

- Each time a cat is delivered to the holding area, the following information should be recorded on the clipboard in the cat holding area on the “Trapped Cat Sign In Sheet” corresponding to your respective trap team: Day/date/time, colony location, trap number, OC number (from caregiver release form), cat description including hair length (DSH, DLH), size (S, M, L), coat color and pattern, your initials. In addition, the cat’s trap number and coat color must be recorded on the OC Caregiver Release form.

- Each time you are in the holding area, check ALL cats present and change the newspapers under their cages if they are soiled. (Be sure to place soiled papers in the garbage can.)

- DO NOT FEED THE CATS. They will have surgery in the morning. The exception to this is small kittens. SMALL KITTENS SHOULD BE GIVEN A MEAL the evening before and the morning of surgery by dropping food from a distance through the wire top of the trap into the bait bowl.

- Be sure cats have a small amount of water at all times right up until surgery. Use the long spout of the watering can to put some water in the trap bowl, but do NOT fill the water cup all the way up. Cats do not drink much and the water will only spill all over them when they are transported and anesthetized, predisposing them to hypothermia. A tiny amount in the bottom of the cup is enough.

- When trapping is complete at a location, the trap team will return all traps to the designated holding area for cleaning. The team leader will ensure that all traps are accounted for as well as all trapping supplies, including the trap pack and additional gloves and flashlights.

- On the day of surgery, cats must be checked in to the OC surgery clinic and the completed Caregiver Release form must be submitted to OC staff by the trap team leader. Likewise, cats must be checked out at the conclusion of the clinic.

- At the conclusion of the surgery day, the team leader must review each of their cats’ medical records and complete the information on sex, reproductive status and medical concerns (if any) in the corresponding columns of the Trapped Cat Sign In Sheet in the holding area.

- The cats will spend the night in the holding area and trap team members must monitor and then return them to their respective colonies the following day according to the instructions herein. The team leader will ensure that cats are properly discharged, monitored overnight and safely returned.

- Throughout the process of trapping, you will be entering and departing from the veterinary college facilities after hours. It is imperative that you ensure that all doors are closed securely—including the large (ceiling height) double doors in the trap loading area. If needed, campus security can be reached at 352-294-4444.
Trapping Pack Contents and Supplies

1. Scissors
2. Cable ties
3. Heavy gloves
4. Flashlight
5. Bait (usually canned mackerel) and plastic can lid
6. Can opener
7. Tongue depressors
8. Trap covers to cover traps (enough for all traps)
9. Paper towels
10. Large plastic baggies for sealing stinky fish cans in
11. Pens, Sharpies
12. Trap labels (plain white sticky labels)
13. Latex exam gloves
14. Plastic tarp and towels or pads to line car interior for transporting cats
15. Garbage bag
16. Bug spray

Don’t forget:

• Your traps along with cloth trap covers and plastic tarps and towels for protecting your vehicle when transporting cats!

• Extra gloves for all team members. You may need to bring a flashlight from home to check the traps at night.

• Plenty of bait!
**Safety Instructions**

Trap safely

- Always wear heavy gloves
- Use common sense
- Watch the weather
- Close the traps when the weather is bad
- Communicate with each other frequently
  - By telephone
  - Use notebook in the cat holding area to leave each other messages
- Bring a teammate or friend when checking the traps at night

Read the instructions for caregivers on safe and humane trapping.

**Policy regarding lactating queens:**

If a lactating female is trapped, the trappers will search the area for kittens. If kittens can not be located, every effort will be made to spay and release lactating queens within 24 hours of trapping so that they can care for and nurse their kittens.

**Tips for Capturing Queens and Their Kittens:**

- Females with kittens will be attracted by the sound of their kittens. Previously trapped kittens can be placed near the trap. Similarly, kittens will be easier to trap if their mom is in a trap nearby.

- Some very young kittens can be caught without a trap, but are still too wild to be handled easily. Wearing protective gloves, use a thick towel to pick up the kitten to protect yourself from scratching and biting. This will also prevent the kitten from squirming away from you until you can contain it in a trap or carrier.

**If you are bitten or scratched contact Dr. Griffin immediately.**

**If a cat is in poor condition/severely injured contact Dr. Griffin immediately.**

*Dr. Griffin - #803-622-7180 (cell)*
**TRAPPING AND CAT CARE INSTRUCTIONS FOR TRAP TEAMS:**

**Trapping** (Note: Times are approximate.)

7:00 PM

- If a caregiver is available, speak with them – Introduce yourself and ask them to sign the OC Caregiver Release form. Be sure they understand what you will be doing and when – and that, for safety reasons, they should not touch the traps or cats! Also, pet cats should remain indoors!

- Set all traps in your team’s assigned trapping location(s) (see section on page 9 entitled “Setting the Traps”).

- Some cats may be captured almost immediately – Check the traps before you leave the location to see if this has happened, and if so see the section on page 9 entitled “What To Do If There’s A Cat In The Trap”.

- Consider placing a new trap in any area where a cat was immediately trapped – it may be a hot spot!

10:00 PM

- Check the traps; if indicated, see the section on page 9 entitled “What To Do If There’s A Cat In The Trap”.

- Call the next trap checker to tell them how many and which traps remain.

6:00 AM

- Check the traps; if indicated, see the section on page 9 entitled “What To Do If There’s A Cat In The Trap”.

- Return all unoccupied traps to the holding area – Please remove any remaining bait. The traps will be cleaned by staff and volunteers.

- Admit cats to the OC clinic.

**THE TRAP TEAM LEADER MUST PRESENT THE COMPLETED CAREGIVER RELEASE FORM TO THE OC CHECK IN STATION. CATS SHOULD BE PLACED IN THE HOLDING AREA AS DIRECTED BY OC ADMISSION STAFF.**

**IF ANY TRAPPED CAT “ACTS TAME”, NOTIFY DR. GRIFFIN BEFORE SURGERY.**
**Cat Care:**

**Morning and evening checks of cats in holding area**

- The morning of surgery, be sure to check each cat (wearing gloves, pull the pad back to quickly view the cat). Ask yourself: does the cat look OK, has the cat given birth in the trap, does the cat appear tame; is the cat a fat spayed cat? Discuss any concerns with Dr. Griffin before surgery.

- Cats will be recovering from anesthesia in their traps in the holding area in the evening, and teams must plan to check on their cats after class. Each cat should be checked (wearing gloves, pull the pad back to quickly view the cat). Cats that are very alert/awake should receive a **small amount** of water using the long spout of the watering can to place it in the bowl without opening the trap and a small portion of canned food (drop the food through the wire mesh on the top of the trap). Turn the lights out for the evening. **Be sure to orient the trap in the holding area such that the bowls are on the end facing furthest from the door**—this will greatly increase the odds that the cats will eat and drink.

- The morning following surgery, check cats to be sure they have fully recovered. Give them each a small portion of canned food (drop the food through the wire mesh on the top of the trap).

If any cat does not appear to be recovering well, call Dr. Griffin. #803-622-7180.

**Discharge**

- Trap teams must officially discharge their cats from the OC clinic following surgery.

- The cats will remain at the vet school in the holding area overnight to recover. See care instructions above.

**Return of cats to their respective colonies**

- Trap teams check and release the cats at their respective trap locations the morning following surgery **PROVIDED THEY APPEAR FULLY RECOVERED.** If cats do not appear to be fully recovered, consult Dr. Griffin. Lactating queens should be released the evening following surgery if fully recovered (consult Dr. Griffin). **Be sure to check and feed the cats as specified above prior to transport and release.**

- Be prepared to discuss general discharge instructions and any special medical concerns with caregivers.
Setting the Traps:

- Select a level, protected (ex: in bushes or against the side of a building) location (cats will not enter traps that wobble).
- Bait each trap with mackerel in one bowl, leaving the other bowl empty.
- Be certain that the rear door is securely latched closed.
- Record the date, trap location and your initials on the trap using an adhesive label.
- Set each trap in the appropriate location; place a trap cover around the trap taking care to leave both ends of the trap uncovered.
- If possible, use grass, leaves or loose soil to “disguise” the bottom of the trap. Consider leaving a tiny trail of bait leading into the trap.

What To Do If There’s A Cat In The Trap:

- Wearing thick protective gloves, carry the trap to the holding area (be sure to keep the trap covered while you are carrying it: this reduces stress on the cat and the risk of a claw reaching through the trap to you).
- The cat will remain in the trap until it is ready for release the following day; DO NOT OPEN THE TRAP AT ANY TIME!
- Record the following information on the clipboard in the cat holding area on the Trapped Cat Sign In Sheet corresponding to your respective trap team: Day/date/time, colony location, trap number, OC number (from caregiver release form), cat description including hair length (DSH, DLH), size (S, M, L), coat color and pattern, your initials. In addition, the cat’s trap number and coat color must be recorded on the OCN Caregiver Release form.
- Place the trap such that it is elevated over papers; keep the trap loosely covered to calm the cat and make him/her feel safer; **position the trap so the bowls are towards the back of the trap.**
- Use the watering can to deliver a small amount of water – just enough to cover the bottom of one bowl in the trap. (**Do not fill the water cups all the way up.** Cats do not drink much and the water will only spill all over them when they are transported and anesthetized.)
- If you find a cat with a tipped left ear or an animal other than a cat in the trap, remove the towels/blankets to allow maximum visibility, point the trap away from yourself, and lift the release door; stay back at a safe distance until the cat or other creature has departed and then reset the trap (see section entitled “Setting the Traps”). Be sure to record what you caught on the bottom of your team’s log in sheet in the holding area!
- If any cat is displaying signs of upper respiratory infection (runny eyes, nasal discharge), the cat should be placed in the designated URI holding room.
Use this space to record the location of all traps and fellow team members’ phone numbers: