



NEWSLETTER

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Adventures in Trapping

TNR (Trap Neuter Return). Sounds pretty easy, doesn't it? Not so much. Think about it. You just received a call asking for assistance in trapping a feral cat. First question you need to ask? Where is it located? A home, a business, a convenience center, or in a neighborhood where many are feeding it?

There are many questions you will need answers to. Is it regularly fed at one location at a certain time a day? Are there various people who have taken it upon themselves to provide food/water for the animal, such as a local business, or within a neighborhood? When considering how to go about trapping a cat, you'll need to restrict its food for 24 to 48 hours and that may mean contacting an entire neighborhood to not put out food for 48 hours, or posting in a business, or putting out a sign informing people that over the next 48 hours the animals should not be fed because you will be trapping it to have it spayed and neutered.

You've established the location, all parties that are feeding it have been informed. What's next?

The game plan:

1. Contact a spay/neuter facility to determine a date you can bring in the animal for surgery.
2. After talking to all the involved parties, you now know what time of day to best trap the feline. It would be at the routine feeding time, that others have established as well as the location. Is it on a porch, in a garage, next to the workshop, or wherever others have found it convenient to place food for the animal.
3. Obtain permission to be on the property. (convenience center, store, location, property owner).
4. Plan to trap 48 hours prior to your spay/neuter appointment. You may get lucky, and trap the animal on the first try, however, if you don't, you need that second day to try again. Keeping your commitment to the spay/neuter clinics is important, and the cat may need to acclimate to the trap and be hungry enough to enter it.

The plan is in place. Gather up your traps, crib sheets, cat food, and feeding dishes. You may want to take a snack/drink (you may be there for an extended period of time). Set the trap with food and place it in the area, the animal typically eats.

Here is where patience is a virtue. Locate yourself within eyesight of the trap, but far enough away that you're not scaring the animal from returning to its feeding ground. You want to be as quiet as possible. Even though the environment now looks different to the cat, they will still approach to find food, since they haven't eaten in 24 to 48 hours.

You see them walking around the trap, smelling the food, trying to scratch the ground to get through the cage to where the food is located. It is a waiting game. When they are hungry enough to overcome their fear of enclosures, they will enter the trap. Once they step on the plate mechanism, the trap will close upon them, and a frantic outburst will occur. You need to be ready with the crib sheet to cover the trap immediately. This will calm the cat and prevent it from doing injury to itself. Keep a cover around the trap at all times. Only remove it when you have to care for the animal.

Consider yourself lucky, if you caught it within the first hour. Otherwise, once the animal has deserted the trap you have choices to make:

- * A set trap should never be left unattended. Cats have been mutilated/ killed by predators when left in an exposed trap. I have also been watching a trap, when someone attempted to steal it.
- * You can gather all your items and plan on returning the next feeding time, or you can choose to begin to acclimate the animal to the trap, by tying both ends open and leaving food in the center of the trap. This should only be done in secure locations. The trap might be stolen.
- * When you return, reset the trap and wait. Typically, by the second day you will have success. However, there are no guarantees.
- * If after the second day, the feline is still elusive, you must call to cancel your spay/neuter appointment and reschedule to try another day....

Success!!!! Now what do I do?

You now have an animal to keep nourished and safe until you have arrived at the clinic.....

House them in a secure and comfortable location (take into consideration the time of year you trapped: winter, summer, heat index, freezing temperatures). Provide some type of bedding in the back end of the trap for comfort (resting on the cage wire cannot be comfortable). Provide water and food. You may want to place a pee pad under the trap for easy cleanup.

Now here is where some finesse comes into play and much caution needs to be taken.... It helps if you've worked with an experienced trapper. How do you get the full food/ water dishes and sleeping pad in place? Skills that are learned, and practice helps make it easier.

Remember, you are now caring for this animal until it is handed over to the clinic staff. At midnight before the surgery day, all food must be removed. Water can be available, but an empty stomach is required for surgery. Depending on how long you have to house this feline, you will be changing out the pee pad, replenishing food and water, and trading out the sleeping pad if it gets wet/soiled.

The day has arrived!!

Remove the water dish, ensure the trap is clean, keep it covered, and transport to the spay/neuter clinic. Finished???

Not yet. After surgery, when the clinic releases the animal, transport it back to its community or to your comfortable location. If it is a female, it is recommended you keep it for an additional 24 to 48 hours for healing to begin and the animal regain some strength. (There are different opinions as to whether it should be a day or up to a week. Many vets believe keeping the animal trapped is much more stressful and feel the animal should be released as soon as possible). Tom cats' surgery is much less invasive, and they can be released upon their return.

Once the animals have been returned to their communities, life for the trapper can return to normal. Wishful thinking. All the traps must be cleaned and bleached. Bedding and dishes need to be cleaned. That comfortable location you housed the feline in probably needs to be swept, mopped, and garbage disposed of.

Now you can relax..... until the next request for TNR comes in!

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