

HUMANE TRAPPING INSTRUCTIONS FOR FERAL CATS

No More Homeless Pets in Utah

1-866-PETSFIX (738-7349) or (801) 364-0370 X 18

Find us online at www.utahpets.org or e-mail feralfix@utahpets.org

The following guidelines have been gathered from Alley Cat Allies (Alleycat.org), No More Homeless Pets in Utah (UtahPets.org) and Community Animal Welfare Society (CAWS.org).

What is Trap, Neuter, Return (TNR)?

TNR is a humane, non-lethal approach to feral cat population control. It is a comprehensive management plan where healthy feral (wild) cats are sterilized, vaccinated and returned to their habitat where they are provided with long-term care.

1. What to do before you trap
2. Time to trap... now what?
3. Troubleshooting Trapping tips
4. Important safety information
5. Notes about pregnant and lactating cats
6. Keeping cats warm in winter
7. Miscellaneous information
8. Feral cat tracking sheet



It is perfectly normal to feel hesitant at first about trapping – but PLEASE don't put off your TNR efforts! It does get easier and easier, and when you see your happy, healthy, STERILE colony you'll know it was WELL WORTH THE EFFORT!

Each cat will have a tiny tip of its ear removed (while under anesthesia) to indicate it is an altered feral cat. This does not hurt the cat and is very important! The ear-tip proves to municipal shelters and/or property owners that the cats are indeed altered through TNR. Remember, a tipped ear may save a feral cat's life!

1. What to do before you trap

- a) Plan ahead!** Establish a routine feeding schedule and acclimate your cats to the trap (or garbage can.) If you have a trap, padlock the trap open so you are certain the trap will not accidentally trigger. Put generous amounts of treats in the trap at the same time of day you eventually intend trap. The cats will get used to going in and out of the trap which will make your trapping day much easier! Don't have a trap? That's okay! A large empty garbage can works: tip the garbage can on its side and put yummy treats near the back of the can every single day. On trapping day simply set the trap inside the tipped-over can. The cats are already used to going inside the confined area and will *usually* enter easily. This routine is the most effective TNR tip!
- b) NEVER leave a trap unattended** unless it is locked to a secure object and locked open - not set for trapping. Use a padlock to lock the trap door open rather than wire or string. This will ensure that a cat or person cannot undo the tie and let the trap close. Even if you think the trap is in a "safe" location, it is important to secure it from theft. If someone steals a trap, they probably do not intend to use it for humane purposes and you will be financially responsible to replace the trap.
- c) Talk to neighbors and property owners.** It is very important to talk to persons who might have loose pet cats. You will most-likely find both supportive and non-supportive comments regarding your TNR efforts. Many times supporters will lend a hand and you will also have the opportunity to address the concerns of the others. It is imperative that you address their concerns to ensure your cats' future safety. Please contact us for TNR door-hangers, TNR brochures or handouts on how to minimize the negative impact of feral cats (i.e. how to keep cats out of gardens, cat predation, cat maintenance, taming feral kittens, etc.)
- d) Call your veterinarian** once you've established which veterinarian you are using (participating veterinarians are listed on the back of each Feral Fix voucher.) Ask when/how they accept feral cats. Many veterinarians require an appointment but some are flexible knowing that it can take a few attempts to catch feral cat(s). **If you do schedule an appointment, make sure to call the clinic and alert them if you are unsuccessful in trapping and are unable to keep your*

appointment. * Many caregivers trap the evening before an appointment so they can try again early the next morning if they are unsuccessful at first. It is very important to minimize the possibility of cancelling an appointment. On the other hand, if you trap more cats than you have appointments for do not release the cat(s)! Call your veterinarian immediately to see if they will accept the cat or you can check with other participating veterinarians in your area. NOTE: It is very difficult to re-trap cats!

e) Other issues you should discuss with your vet clinic before TNR

- **When does the clinic require you to pick up the cats?** Most vets will want you to pick the cat up the same day of surgery. ****IMPORTANT:** In this case you need to keep the cat in the trap overnight, releasing it the next morning.
- **What additional services do you want for the cats and what will those services cost?** No More Homeless Pets in Utah highly recommends feral cats receive a rabies vaccine in accordance with state mandates, as well as an FVRCP vaccine. *Some veterinarians offer no- or low-cost vaccines for feral cat caregivers, thanks to a generous donation from Schering-Plough Animal Health. Please inquire with your veterinarian. Some caregivers test their cats for Leukemia, examined and treated for ear-mites, worms or fleas as needed. ****IMPORTANT:** If you have your cats Leukemia-tested you must let your vet know when you drop the cat off what you want done if your cat tests positive for the disease. If you trap a cat with an injury or illness it may require additional care and costs order to treat. Caregivers are responsible for all additional costs associated with additional care.

f) Put together needed trapping supplies. In order to trap effectively you will need the following:

- Humane trap(s)
- 2 padlocks and a cable for each trap, to lock trap door open and to secure trap to a heavy object
- Can of tuna, sardines or mackerel (in oil) - these are the most enticing baits (****DO NOT** use chicken bones or other bones; bones can be life-threatening for cats). Pop-top cans are recommended.
- Spoons and can opener
- Newspaper and a dishtowel to line the bottom of each trap-do not use cardboard
- A large towel or cloth for each trap-It's important the cloth is large enough to completely cover the entire trap on all sides
- Flashlight if you are trapping at dawn or dusk
- Pair of thick gloves
- Flyers or TNR literature to give to anyone who may question what you're doing
- First Aid Kit
- Paper towels and/or antibacterial hand wipes
- Tracking sheet to record identification information; pen to write with
- Cat food and clean water to leave for any remaining cats
- Tools such as pliers, pocketknife and can of cooking spray oil in case any traps are not functioning properly ****It's best to test traps before you set them****

2. Time to Trap... now what?

Just remember that when a trap goes off a cat will often panic a bit. As you approach the cat may struggle even more. Do not worry, this is normal! Quickly and quietly go to the trap and cover the entire trap so the cat cannot see. This will calm the cat considerably. Remove the trap from the area immediately. This step is very important not only to protect the cat but also to ensure other cats do not see the cat thrashing around and become frightened. Place the trap in a protected, preferably temperature-controlled environment.

NOTE: NEVER set an uncovered trap unless you are nearby so that you can immediately cover the entire trap when a cat has been trapped. You must be far enough away not to frighten the cats but close enough to monitor the situation.

DON'T FORGET: as soon as you see any new cats to Trap, Neuter, Return (TNR) as soon as possible. Simply follow these instructions again as soon as possible to prevent any pregnancies or unwanted kittens. The more you do it, the easier it will become!

(1) This is a typical brown trap. Even if your trap is slightly different from this, the directions will still be the same. Make sure your trap is clean and hosed down to remove large debris. Then spray the entire trap with a dilute bleach solution (1:32) to kill any bacteria and viruses on the trap. Do this every time you store the trap and reuse it or if you're trapping in a different location. Cleaning between cats at the same location isn't necessary but can help remove foreign smells and make it easier to catch the cats.



(2) Fold a stack of clean newspaper so it will lay flat inside the trap from front to back. Use several layers of paper to protect the cat's toes. (NOTE: If you catch a cat you've already trapped simply release him. But you must remove the torn paper and start over at this step, relining the trap properly and following the rest of the instructions each time.)

(3) This trap has an easy-open back door. Open this door and slide the paper in so that the flat, smooth side is facing up. This will hide the trap mechanism from the cat and protect its toes from the wire below.



(4) Open your can of tuna in oil (or smelly bait of your choice), pouring the excess oil onto the paper in the trap. Most fish have quite an odor, as does smoked chicken. Using these meats that have been soaked in oil will increase your chances of success. Try any bait you think your cat will like! If you set more than one trap, try different baits. Different cats will prefer different smells.

(5) Now place a large spoonful of the bait at the very back, center of the trap. You'll also need to use a trail of 2-3 pea-sized drops of your bait at the front of the trap.

(6) Now your trap is ready to be set! You have two basic options: to set the trap completely covered or, if your cats are fearful of a cover, you can set your trap completely open, uncovered. ****IMPORTANT: NEVER set an uncovered trap unless you are nearby so that you can immediately cover the entire trap when a cat has been trapped.**





(7) If you're covering the trap, simply set the front door open (see left picture). Now use a CLEAN, BLEACHED, SCENT-LESS cover that covers both sides, front and back completely (see right pictures.) The cat shouldn't be able to see outside once it's trapped. This will prevent many injuries to the cat's feet and face. ****NOTE:** If a cat is scared to go into your traps it may be from a weird smell – on the trap or the cover. Consistent cleaning with unscented soaps and bleach is important! Also see: "Troubleshooting Trapping Tips" below.

(8) Be sure to leave a little extra fabric over the door so that as soon as the trap is set it will fall to cover the door completely. Once you've caught a cat, don't forget to check for an ear-tip. Release any ear-tipped cats (unless your plan is to re-vaccinate your colony.) If the cat doesn't have an ear-tip, cover him up and place the covered trap in a secure (preferably temperature-controlled) environment until your appointment the next day. Make sure the cat is safe from overheating or freezing, predators, ants and people.

Repeat these steps until you've caught every last one! Leaving even one unaltered male isn't advisable. All it takes is one unaltered female to show up and become pregnant! Then, you'll be back to step 1 – except this time with even more cats and kittens! So, don't stop until you've sterilized every single one.

3. Troubleshooting Trapping Tips

Often what works for one cat won't work for others. A colony can require various methods to successfully trap every cat!

- Establish the feeding routine in a padlocked open trap as outlined in step 1. If you don't have a trap available use a garbage can tipped over on its side.
- Do not leave food out overnight. If you do, you may be feeding cats you don't know exist because they only appear in the middle of the night. ****You will also attract other nocturnal wildlife! (This endangers your colony as well as the wildlife; drawing unwanted attention from neighbors, who may or may not be angry at the situation.)**
- Place bait in the front of a padlocked open trap. Then everyday slowly move bait further back into the trap.
- After bleaching traps, wash in Dr Bronner's lavender soap to get rid of the bleach smell.
- Roll bleached traps in catnip to get rid of bleach and human smells.
- Cover the treadle with a dishtowel to disguise it.
- Tightly cover back and sides of trap, tucking towel under trap so cat can't reach in and grab bait from outside the trap.
- Don't cover the trap at all! ****Covering the trap is usually recommended but sometimes the reverse work. Always closely watch an uncovered trap! Cover immediately after cat has been trapped.**
- Use smelly bait like mackerel or warm chicken (no bones!)
- In winter months use hand-warmers under your bait dish. The heat keeps the bait warm and smelly.
- Hang bait from the top of the trap rather than putting in a dish on the bottom of the trap.
- Try catnip as bait.
- Place open can of cat food in a padlocked closed trap for one day, do not feed cats. Next day throw away the open, used can, this time setting trap with fresh bait.
- If smelly bait doesn't work, use the regular dry cat food you typically feed the cats.

- Withhold food for 24-48 hours prior to trapping.
- Trying to trap a newcomer but other already-fixed cats keep entering the trap? Place plates of bait out for the “regulars” and watch closely. If the cat you want to trap comes close use a squirt bottle to scare him off. After the regulars are very full, then set your trap - or try the manual trigger method.
- For small or young cats that you see step on the treadle but don't set it off, weigh-down treadle using a washer, flat smooth rocks or a can of unopened cat food to add weight to the treadle. Also, check to make sure you have “hair-triggered” the trap when setting, placing the bar as close to the trigger position as possible. Spray olive oil on trap mechanisms, to make them extra slippery.
- Manual trigger method: Manually set trap by tying a string to a pvc pipe or piece of wood the same height as the height of the door opening. Prop open door with pipe or wood, hold string taught a few yards away, wait for cat(s) to enter and pull the string HARD. Try this method up to forty yards away. Be sure to test before attempting! This is a great way to catch 3 or 4 kittens all at once. Try using lots of bait at once and wait for multiple kittens to go in at once before pulling string. ****Don't trap multiple adult cats** this way as adults can injure one another if trapped together.
- You can often use previously trapped kittens to lure the mother cat into a trap and vice-versa. Place the trapped animal, still in its trap against the back door of another set trap. Use a sheet to cover both traps, luring the un-trapped family member into the set trap.
- If none of these tips work e-mail info@feralfix.org for more suggestions.

4. Important safety information

- a) **Do not try to open the trap or transfer the cat into a carrier.** It is important to maintain a “hands off” policy when dealing with feral cats. They are often frightened of humans and might claw or bite out of fear. Transferring also increases the risk of the cat escaping –cats can be extremely difficult to trap a second time! Check out www.animal-traps.com for more information on transfer cages and other feral cat equipment.
- b) **A cat should NEVER spend more than 24-hours in a trap before surgery.** Take the cat (in the covered trap) to a quiet, safe and warm indoor location until you can take it to the veterinarian. The safest thing to do is to bring the trapped cat indoors. To protect your floors try using a large piece of plastic along with a few layers of newspaper. Do not let other animals have access to the cat. You can slide open the back door to put a shallow dish of water for the cat. A jar lid works nicely! Do not open the door more than an inch. Some ferals, trying to escape, will charge the door so be sure not to open the door too wide or you or the cat could become injured or the cat may escape. Make sure you latch the back door. Nervous cats may not drink the water you provide; however, it is very important they don't become dehydrated.
- c) **Following surgery keep the cat in a safe and warm indoor location.** Be sure to keep the cat in the trap! You can also bring a clean towel for the clinic staff to place in the trap following surgery. While the cat is recovering you can also provide fresh food and water (in shallow dishes.) If the cat charges or you're nervous to open the trap door, simply spoon some soft food in through the metal grating, this provides enough moisture for an overnight stay. ****Many vets place food in the feral trap already.**
- d) **Ensure the cat is bright-eyed before releasing.** If you find the cat is still groggy the next morning or you notice bleeding contact your vet IMMEDIATELY, before you release him/her. These complications are rare; however, if the cat is a pregnant female, the weather is below freezing or the cat needs additional care you may need to hold the cat for a longer period of time. The best information on fostering a feral cat can be found on the Neighborhood Cats website: <http://www.neighborhoodcats.org/info/fostering.htm>. You can foster a feral cat – totally hands-off! Fostering ferals does take the proper set-up so do not attempt to transfer a feral cat before reading this important information. If you do not have access to the internet call Amanda at 801-364-0370 ext 18 or your local Trap Trading Post for transfer/fostering instructions.
- e) **Before releasing any cat** make sure to log all of your tracking information onto your feral cat tracking sheet (attached.) Pictures may be very helpful to you as well. You may also want to keep your vet records with your tracking sheet.

- f) **Release the cat back to the same area where it was living before – do not release the cat at another location.** When releasing the cat, face the door of the trap in the direction you want the cat to run. Uncover the rear area of the trap and pull open the rear door. Be careful not to release the cat close to a busy road or too close to a fence or structure it might be inclined to climb. Give it a clear and safe path for its “escape”. You should wear your gloves and protective clothing (but the cat will most-likely run forward and not look back!)
- g) **If you are concerned that a cat cannot return to its home territory following TNR you must research relocation tactics before trying to relocate the cat.** If you simply release a cat into an area it is not familiar with it will most-likely become a victim of traffic, inclement weather, inhumane humans or slowly starve. Detailed relocation information can be found at www.alleycat.org. If you do not have internet access simply contact your Trap Trading Post or call 1-866-PETSFIX for a handout on relocation. Relocation is a very time-consuming and detailed process! You must research relocation thoroughly before attempting. ****It is critical that you confine the cat for 2-4 weeks at the new location before release.**

5. A Note about Pregnant and Lactating Cats

Many cats, even if they are noticeably pregnant, can still be safely spayed. Yes, this does require aborting the unborn kittens. This is certainly not something anyone wants to do; however, recognizing the risks to feral kittens living outdoors and knowing how many cute, cuddly, tame kittens are being euthanized every year in area shelters, we believe spaying is the best course of action in dealing with pregnant cats. Your veterinarian is best qualified to determine if it is safe for the cat to undergo surgery. You also must realize that every time you release a trapped cat, you lessen your chances of re-trapping that cat. If you decide to contain a pregnant feral cat in a cage until she has given birth and weaned the kittens, you are making a 2-4 month commitment – that includes allowing the cat to have her kittens, you will tame, spay and neuter the kittens and then adopt-out. This takes considerable set-up and maintenance work. For more information, contact your Trap Trading Post! If you know a lactating female cat with kittens over 4 weeks of age we recommend spaying the mother (before her kittens wean and/or she goes into another heat cycle.) Catching and taming her kittens first is the best-case scenario and should be your goal. If your veterinarian informs you that a cat they spayed is lactating, it may be best to release the cat that evening rather than holding her overnight. Ask for your veterinarian’s recommendation. Female cats can go into heat while nursing kittens, so it’s important that you do not wait long to spay any female cat, whatever the case.

6. Keeping cats warm in winter

Follow these directions for easy to make cat shelters! No More Homeless Pets in Utah may be able to provide feral cat caregivers with pre-made winter cat houses or the large Styrofoam coolers to make your own shelter. For availability please call Amanda at 801-364-0370 X 18.

- **Large Styrofoam coolers make great feral cat shelters!** Many people ask their veterinarian to save the large coolers their vaccines are shipped in because they are extra thick and are perfect outdoor cat houses. Hospitals, fish markets and even grocery stores may donate large coolers to you. Some farm stores sell extra large coolers manufactured for deer meat storage. If the coolers are less than 1 ½ inches thick, be sure to cover the box with several layers of bubble wrap and/or insulation. When using insulation be certain that it is the kind that has paper on both sides and make sure NO fibers are exposed when your shelter is completed (you can duct tape over any exposed areas near the door hole as well.)
- To begin, turn cooler upside down and cut an entrance hole (sometimes two) on one side of the shelter (or sides). Place entrance hole 1-2 inches above the line where the lid meets the cooler body and place it at one end of the longer side of the cooler. Now glue the cooler lid shut. Glue Styrofoam together using sturdy “Liquid Nails” or foam insulation product “Great Stuff.” Reinforce seam with duct tape. (In other words, do everything you can to make shelter as water-proof as possible.) Two entrance holes are recommended only if the shelter is in an area where predators may pose a threat to the cats.
- Next, wrap the shelter (think Christmas present!) with the thickest black plastic sheeting you can find. You can purchase this at any home improvement or garden store. Tape all seams with duct tape or similar that withstands cold temps and water. Be **generous** with your duct tape and ‘T’ the corners because duct tape does lose some of its adhesive quality in

the wet and cold Utah winter. After wrapping, locate your door hole and cut the plastic using a box cutter and duct-tape around the door.

- **Make the Most of Your Winter Shelter:** Duct-tape a curtain of bubble wrap over the door hole(s). Use two layers. Cut the bubble wrap to make fringes (leave the top few inches solid and cut fringe vertically.) Now attach your curtain over the door(s)!
- **If your winter shelter is exposed to the elements** it is best to put a piece of plywood over the top of the shelter as well as another piece of wood (or similar material) at a slant over the doorway. You may also need to place the shelter on a pallet, lifting it above the ground. Another option is to make an igloo-type tunnel over the doorway using a smaller cooler or other material. ****It is very important to do what you can to keep moisture OUT!**
- If the shelter is to be placed outside, hardwood chips (not cedar) or dry, easily-available straw make great stuffing inside the shelter. They absorb moisture and keep the cats very warm. (This same advice goes for outdoor dog houses. Never use fabric, always fill with clean, fresh straw every season.) NOTE: Cloth can get wet and freeze, making the shelter cold and useless. If the shelter is in a garage or other very dry area, towels or kitty beds can also work very well. You can buy fleece or fake sheepskin at fabric stores and cut to the shape of the cooler/ house. Check your shelter frequently to ensure it is staying dry!
- When you first use the shelter, try adding some catnip to the straw to get your cats interested. Also, if you have bubble wrap fringe you may want to tack it up (for a little while) so the cat can easily see the entrance. Placing the shelter on a pallet keeps it off the cold ground but is not necessary. In exposed areas it is very helpful to weigh-down the shelter with bricks or similar.
- **If the shelter is in a shared area** it's important to make a laminated sign that says something like: "This shelter is part of a humane Trap, Neuter, Return (TNR) program for feral and stray cats, please do not remove. If you have questions, please call..." Always get permission from property owners before placing a shelter on property other than your own!
- **Pamper your cats!** Valley Vet Supply (www.valleyvet.com or 1-800-419-9524) (1) Electric heated pad, item number 20917 for small or 20918 for medium (2) Snuggle Safe Brand heated microwave disks - stay warm for up to 12 hours.

7. MISCELLANEOUS

Need financial assistance? If you need financial assistance for spay/neuter call 1-866-PETSFIX (738-7349) or visit www.utahpets.org to apply for the No More Homeless Pets in Utah's Feral Fix program. This program offers feral cat surgeries at considerably-reduced rates for caregivers who otherwise could not afford the surgery for their feral cat colony. Some restrictions do apply so please call for more information. Some cities whose local governments support TNR efforts may offer residents special TNR services. Call 801-364-0370 X 18 for more details.

If you have further questions, contact NMHPU at X 18, your local Trap Trading Post or search the Alley Cat Allies website www.alleycat.org for detailed information on how to deal with these and other cat related issues:

- Dealing with Complaints about Ferals
- Cats and Gardens
- Cats and Predation
- Cats and Risks to Human Health
- Feral Cat Maintenance
- Hard to Trap Cats- How to get the Wily Ones!
- Taming Feral Kittens and neo-natal Kitten Care
- Finding Homes for Tame Cats That Have no Owner
- Relocating Feral Cats
- How To Keep Wildlife Out
- Inexpensive Feral Cat Shelters
- And more!

More resources for feral cat maintenance can be found at the following websites:

www.utahpets.org, www.alleycat.org, www.caws.org, www.neighborhoodcats.org or www.hsus.org

All information provided in this handout is for informational use only. You may find various opinions and suggestions regarding feral cat care and maintenance. Although some organizations may differ slightly in opinion and practice, the mission, to humanely reduce feral cat populations, is the same. Don't forget to contact us if you would like brochures and/or door hangers about No More Homeless Pets Feral Fix program. Also available; a nine minute video produced by Alley Cat Allies entitled "*The Humane Solution, Reducing Feral Cat Populations with Trap-Neuter-Return.*" This video is a great way to introduce TNR to your city or county commissioners, area shelters, and individuals. Some ordinance restrictions may apply in your area. If you would like to become involved with making TNR an officially endorsed method of cat population control in your community call Amanda at 801-364-0370 X 18.

