

Trap-Neuter-Return for Community Cats: The Basics

Follow these [basic steps](#) to join with thousands of others across the country working to improve the lives of community cats—also referred to as feral cats. We know you may feel nervous, but with our expert advice, you can calm your nerves and get to work improving cats' lives. Find more in-depth information about the entire trapping process and more details at www.alleycat.org/Trap-Neuter-Return.

Set a feeding schedule.

Feed the cats at the same time and place every day—usually for about one to two weeks. Use this same time when you are ready to trap. Withhold food for 24 hours before your trapping day. Always provide water. (Optional tip: Feed cats out of an unset trap if the area is safe and secure; the cats will acclimate to seeing and walking into them.)

Trap-Neuter-Return

Trap: Humanely trap the cats in a colony.

Neuter: Take the cats in their traps to a veterinarian or spay/neuter clinic to be sterilized, eartipped, and vaccinated.

Return: Return the cats to their original colony site.

Make veterinary appointments ahead of time.

Before your trapping day, call and make reservations with a veterinarian or neuter clinic experienced with community cat protocol. Let them know you may or may not be successful—you may call to cancel your appointment. (Steer clear of veterinarians who do not have experience with community cats.)

Practice, practice, practice.

Practice setting the traps ahead of time. View directions for using traps at www.alleycat.org/Traps.

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Prepare and set the traps.

Prepare traps away from the trap site so you do not disturb the cats. Line the bottom with newspaper. Place about a tablespoon of bait at the back of the trap, past the trip plate, and drizzle a trail of oil in a zigzag pattern leading to the front of the trap. Tag each trap with its location so you can return the cats to the same place later. Place the traps on level ground and set them. Never leave traps unattended. Watch from a distance where you won't intimidate the cats, but you can see if anyone is approaching. Stay calm and have a towel ready!

Cover the traps once they are sprung and transport the cats to the veterinarian.

Once the trap is sprung, cover it immediately and entirely with a large towel or sheet to help keep the cats calm.

Don't pick up sprung traps if other cats are still sniffing around the trapping area. Wait for a quiet moment to fully cover and move the traps. Although the cats are scared and may thrash or seem 'unhappy,' remember to never let a cat out of the trap. Take the cats in their traps to their veterinary appointments.



Care for the cats after surgery.

Hold the cats overnight after their surgery in a temperature-controlled, safe location. While the cats are recovering from anesthesia, they are unable to regulate their body temperature. Provide food and water when the cats are awake by cautiously and slowly lifting the back door of the trap by a half inch and sliding in a plastic lid with food or water. Never open the door or put your hands inside the trap. A good rule of thumb is that cats can be returned 24 hours after surgery, once they're clear-eyed and alert. Talk to your veterinarian about when to return lactating mothers and other special cases.

Return the cats to their outdoor home.

Return the cats to the location where they were trapped. Clean the traps with a non-toxic disinfectant.

On behalf of the cats, thank you. You've done the right thing!

**Join our
movement to
protect cats.**



Alley Cat Allies

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