

## Trapping cats humanely

Trapping is an integral part of the process, but it can be a scary and potentially injurious time for the cats. With a little knowledge and planning you can make the process easier and safer for both you and the cats!

It is best to attempt a mass trapping, catching all of the cats in your colony in just one or two days. This process can seem daunting, but in the long run this attempt has many benefits:



- If the colony is being a nuisance to the area, a mass TNR can resolve many of the issues (noise, smell, fighting, etc.) in a very small amount of time
- The process involves many resources (traps, recovery space, transport, etc.). Mass trapping means all of this coordination only needs to be done once.
- When trapping cats a few at a time it can be very difficult to keep track of which cats you have trapped. With mass trapping, individual identification becomes less important, and the more difficult cats will become increasingly hungry as days go on, and will become more likely to enter a trap.

## Prep work

Preparing for a mass trapping involves many moving parts. Often the planning is much more difficult than the days spent trapping. Below is a list of

1. **Establish a feeding pattern.** For a few weeks, feed the cats in the same place, at the same time, every day. Once the cats have been trained when food is provided, they will begin to reliably show up.
2. **Logistics.** Ensure you have identified all of the resources you will need, and have arranged to have them available to you. You will need to have enough traps for the who colony (plus extras!), food for bait, enough towels or sheets to cover all the traps, transport to the clinic, spay/neuter appointments scheduled, and a recovery space large enough to hold all of the traps.
3. **Withhold food.** Cats can be naturally wary of traps. Many need to be motivated by hunger to enter. It is essential that food is withheld the day before trapping begins. Continue to provide fresh water daily.

## The trapping process

Plan for at least two days for a mass trapping, three if you have 10 or more cats.

1. **Prepare the traps.** Set up all your traps a safe distance from the colony. Check that all are functional, then bait them with a smelly treat.
2. **Set the traps.** Place all the traps in the colony's territory, along well travelled pathways, in common gathering areas, and where you normally provide food. Ensure no traps are out in the open, but rather are against a wall or have a branch camouflaging them. Drop a trail of treats or tuna juice leading to the entrance of each trap.
3. **Monitor.** Remain close enough to keep an eye on all traps, but not so close that you might deter them from approaching. Never leave traps unattended.
4. **Upon catching.** When a cat activates a trap they will likely be very frightened and may begin thrashing around. Quickly cover the trap entirely with a sheet to calm them, or use a cage divider to reduce the amount of space available to them if the sheet does not work.
5. **Reset trap.** Move the trapped cat to safe location, and then move a different trap to that spot (some spots seem to attract more cats than others).
6. **Keep at it.** Continue baiting and monitoring the traps until you have caught all of the cats in the colony, or the cats are ready to return from TNR.



## After trapping

Once you have trapped the cat, your job is to ensure the cat's environment is as low stress as possible, and to ensure they recuperate so they can be reintroduced to their environment.

1. **Keep in trap.** Once a cat has been trapped, the trap will serve as his cage until it is time for TNR. Many fearful or unsocialized cats feel safest in small, dark spaces.
2. **Recovery after surgery.** Cats should be monitored for post-surgical complications in an appropriate recovery area for between 24-72 hours. Spay scars on females should be checked to ensure there is no excessive bleeding or redness at the end of this holding period.
3. **Release in same area.** Return the cats to the same location you found them, and continue to provide care as before (see Question #3, "What is a colony caretaker?" for more information).

## Special considerations for trapping kittens

Often, kittens are not heavy enough to trigger traps intended for adults. When attempting to trap kittens, it is best to prop up the door to an adult sized trap with a water bottle with a string attached, and then lay in wait. Once the kittens enter the trap, you can activate it manually by pulling the string to remove the bottle and close the door to the trap. Alternatively, you use traps designed for smaller sized creatures, such as Tru-Catch 24 or Tomahawk 104. Then, bait the trap with smelly food like you would for adults.

If you have already caught the mother or other kittens from the litter, you can use them as bait as well. They may prove a more powerful motivator than the food! To do this, place the trap containing the mother or other kittens against a wall, and place an active trap butted up against the one with their family member in it (with the door to the trap facing away). Then, cover both traps (except the open trap door) with a sheet or some towels (and some branches for camouflage, if available). This way, if the free kitten wants to access their family members for comfort, the only way they can do so is by entering the active kitten trap.



## References

This information has been adapted from Neighbourhood Cats and Alley Cat Allies. For more information visit:

- <https://www.neighborhoodcats.org/how-to-tnr/trapping/trapping-the-basics>
- <https://www.alleycat.org/community-cat-care/safely-trapping-kittens/>