



Humane Trapping Tips

These instructions assume that you are using a Tomahawk trap, rented at Crittlers Without Litters. Specific instructions regarding the trap may be slightly different if you are using another type of trap.

Prepare for trapping

Try to get the cat(s) you are trying to trap used to being fed at the same place and time of day. Do not feed the cats the day/night before you are going to trap so they will be hungry, which can increase the chance of them finding the bait tempting enough to enter the trap.

Plan to trap on Sunday-Wednesday, preferably at night, so you can bring any cat(s) you have trapped to Crittlers Without Litters the next morning, as we perform surgeries on community cats (those free-roaming or feral cats that are caught in traps and brought to us for surgery) on Monday – Thursday. A sign-in sheet is posted outside the north door at or about 6-6:15 a.m. Trappers can sign in and note whether they have one or two cats. Trappers are limited to two cats per household, per day; one cat per trap. Trappers will be asked to provide proof of residency to take advantage of any available funding. Staff will begin intake of community cats in the order they appear on the sign-in sheet after returning cats from the previous day (if there are any). Trappers are expected to return the following morning at 7 a.m. To retrieve their cats so they may be released back in the area where they were caught.

Prepare the area where you will be holding the cats before bringing them to our clinic. A garage or other sheltered, warm, protected area is best. Put down newspaper to catch any stool, urine or food residue.

You will want to ready your vehicle for their transport. A plastic tarp in the area where you plan to place the cages is a good idea, but you will need to place newspapers or something absorbent on top of the tarp or else any urine that occurs will roll straight off of the plastic and into your vehicle. Please *do not* plan to transport in the back of an open vehicle (like a pickup truck bed) or in the trunk.

Plan for your trapping day. If, for some reason, you trap a cat and have to release it before bringing it to the clinic, there is little chance that you will be able to trap it a second time. Cats catch on to traps pretty quickly.

If you see young kittens, remember they should not be weaned from the mother before 6-8 weeks of age. If you are trapping a nursing female, first try and locate the kittens to see if they are old enough to be weaned. If you plan to tame and foster the kittens to adopt out, they should be taken from the mother at 4-6 weeks. If you wait until the kittens are older than 4-6 weeks before trying to tame them, be aware that the effort gets harder the older the kittens get.

Set the traps

Set your trap(s) just before or at the cats' normal feeding time. Early evening is usually the best time to set traps.

Do not trap in the rain, in the heat of day or during bitter cold. Cats in traps are vulnerable and can suffer during storms or develop heatstroke in the sun. Use common sense.

Fold a piece of newspaper to line the bottom of the trap just covering the trip plate. Cats do not enjoy walking on the wire surface. The paper also helps keep their feet from going through when you pick up the trap. Make sure the paper does not go beyond the trip plate. If you use too much newspaper it can interfere with the trap mechanism or prevent the door from closing properly.

Plan to place the trap(s) on a level surface in the area where the cats you want to catch usually feed or have been seen. If you are trapping in a public area, try to place traps where they will not be noticed by others. Bushes provide good cover for the traps and are often places where cats hide.

Use smelly food to bait the trap. Cheap, stinky cat food, canned tuna in oil, canned Mackerel (from the canned fish section of grocery stores), and original recipe Kentucky Fried Chicken (meat only – no bones) have all been found attractive to cats. Do not put bowls inside the trap to hold food.

Soak a small piece of newspaper (2-3 inches by 3-4 inches) in the juice from the fish or canned cat food and place it on the ground where you plan to place the rear of the trap.

Spoon a small amount of food onto the soaked newspaper scrap. Put the food so the food is as far back in the trap as possible. You want the cat to go all the way into the trap to avoid being injured when the trap door closes. Press the trap down onto the food so that it squishes up through the wire. The idea is to make the food a little hard to get so the cat has to go into the trap as far as possible and work at getting the food long enough to trip the trap.

After you have set the bait, open the trap door by pushing the top of the door in and pulling the bottom of the door upward. There is a small hook attached to the right side of the trap top. It hooks onto a tiny metal cylinder on the right side of the door. The hook holds the door in an open position which also raises the trip plate. When the cat steps on the plate, the hook will release the door and close the trap.

After setting the trap, cover it with a large towel or piece of towel-sized material. Fold the material at the front end of the trap to expose the opening while still covering the top, sides and back of the trap. The cover will help hide the trap and help calm the cat after it is caught.

Never leave traps unattended in an unprotected area. The trapped animal is vulnerable. You should check traps every hour or so. You can often hear the traps trip. As soon as the intended cat is trapped, completely cover the trap and remove the trap from the area. You may consider putting another trap in the same spot if the area hosts a number of cats. Be sure to dispose of the food left on the ground when you pick up the trap.

When you get the trapped cat to a quiet area, lift the cover and check that you have the correct animal - not someone's pet, a wild animal, or previously neutered feral. Cats that have already been spayed or neutered will have the tip of their right ear removed (known as ear-tipping) to indicate that they have already been altered. If you see that you have captured a nursing female, check the area for kittens and make sure any kittens are old enough to be weaned. Cover the cat back up as soon as possible, to avoid the cat from panicking and injuring themselves in the trap.

If you find you have caught a wild animal attracted to the food or an unintended cat, just release the animal quietly as stated in the releasing procedures in this document.

Holding procedures

When you are done trapping, you will have to hold the cats overnight until you can bring them to our clinic.

Place the trapped cat in the prepared protected area. Do not feed them. You can place a small bowl of water in the trap by opening the trap door just a couple of inches and placing the bowl by the trap door. Try to use a bowl that won't be tipped over easily. An empty cat food or tuna can works fairly well. Do not open the door too much or the cat may escape.

Keep the trap covered and check it periodically. The cat(s) will probably be very quiet as long as they are covered. Do not stick fingers in the trap or allow children or pets near the traps. Some of these cats behave exactly like wild animals and can scratch and bite.

Remember: All animal bites are serious. If you have been bitten, seek medical attention and do not release the cat. It will need to be quarantined. Contact Animal Control for complete quarantine instructions.

Wash and change clothes before interacting with your own pets as a precaution against spreading any contagious diseases the cats might carry.

Always have feral kittens examined by a vet and isolate them from your pets. Some deadly diseases can incubate without symptoms.

Releasing the cats

You will pick your trapped cat up the morning after bringing it in for surgery. Pick-up time is at 7 a.m. Since the cat stayed the night at the clinic, it should be alert and ready to be released back into the area where it was trapped.

When you are ready to release the cat(s), take him/her back to the area where they were trapped and release them there. Do not relocate the animal. It will be disoriented and most likely die.

If the veterinarian has indicated a serious medical problem with the cat which you will not be able to treat, you, with the advice of the vet, must make the decision on whether it is safe to release the animal or kinder to euthanize it. Untreated abscesses and respiratory infections, and a number of other conditions, can mean suffering and a slow death.

Make sure the spot you pick for release does not encourage the cat to run into danger (like a busy street) to get away from you. Keep the trap covered until you are ready to release the cat. When ready, simply hold the trap with the release door facing away from you and open the door. The cat will most likely bolt out of the trap. If it is confused, just tilt the trap so the back is slightly up and tap on the back of the trap to encourage it to leave. Never put your hand in the trap. If the cat still will not leave, prop the door open with a stick and leave it for a while.

After releasing the cats, hose off traps and disinfect them with bleach. Never store traps in the "set" position (door open). If the trap was rented through Critters Without Litters, please return the clean, disinfected trap promptly so others may rent it.

Tips to help you succeed

- Carry a flashlight with you if you are trapping at night. That way, you can check traps from a distance and help you avoid getting injured in the dark.
- Bring a cover for any canned food you brought to bait your trap(s). Don't forget to bring something to scoop out the bait food, if you are using bait that is canned.
- Some kittens can be caught without a trap but are still too wild to be easily handled. Use a thick towel to pick up the kitten to help protect you from scratching and biting. This also helps prevent the kitten from squirming away from you.

Good luck with your trapping efforts!