

PACT Humane Society
Cat Overpopulation Resource Effort (CORE) Program
www.pacthumane.org

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) Checklist

Initial Preparation

_____ **Determine suitability of the site.**

Ensure the site is safe for the cat(s) to continue to live in. If the cats are in imminent danger, plan a relocation as a last resort, as this is a very intensive process. Refer to the Alley Cat Allies web site at <http://www.alleycat.org> or call CORE's voice mail to ask for assistance.

_____ **Identify the feeders.**

Identify all parties who are already feeding the cat(s) and let them know you are planning to do a TNR. You may need to explain to them what TNR is. Assure them you are not going to hurt the cats – that you are actually helping them. If other feeders exist, you may want to establish a joint-feeding schedule to share in responsibilities and ask that they offer to help pay for veterinary services.

_____ **Establish a routine feeding schedule.**

Feed the cat(s) at the same time and in the same place for at least one week prior to trapping.

_____ **Assess the colony.**

Using a tracking sheet, document the cats and kittens in the colony. Note a description of each cat including their name, gender (if known), color, markings, and any known health factors, such as visible infections, injuries, and pregnant or nursing cats. Note if any are very friendly strays – can they be adopted? Are there any kittens that can be socialized and adopted?

_____ **Obtain a trap.**

Get one humane box trap for each cat. Secure a sign that reads “Rescue in Progress – Do Not Remove” to the trap. Tape a sign that reads “Feral Cat – Do Not Handle” to the trap door.

_____ **Test the trap.**

Become familiar with the trap. Ensure that all pins are locked in place and that the trip-plate mechanism works. Use a lubricant such as WD-40 on moving parts.

PACT Humane Society
Cat Overpopulation Resource Effort (CORE) Program
www.pacthumane.org

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) Checklist

_____ **Make an appointment with a veterinarian.**

Once you have assessed the colony and are ready to trap, make a tentative appointment with a PACT Humane Society participating veterinarian or other provider of low cost spay/neuter services for feral cats.

3-5 Days Prior to Trapping

_____ **Place the trap(s) in the feeding location.**

There are two schools of thought on the trapping process:

1) Place a closed trap in the feeding location for a few days prior to trapping. Feed the cat outside the trap but near the trap. Withhold food the day before trapping – up to two days at the most – so the cat will be hungry enough to enter the trap. *Always make water available.* **OR**

2) Place an unset but open trap in the feeding location for a few days prior to trapping – feeding the cat in the trap each day. To do this, use sturdy plastic twist-ties to secure the door in an open position. Line the floor of the trap with a thin layer of newspaper, and place the food at the opening of the trap. Each day, put the food deeper into the trap by a few inches. Each time the cat has finished eating and leaves the trap, undo the twist-ties and close the door before leaving the area.

If trapping multiple cats, stagger the traps, facing them in different directions.

_____ **Prepare your supplies:**

- _____ one can of tuna or sardines in oil per cat (if withholding food)
- _____ can opener (if canned food does not have a pop-off lid)
- _____ quite a bit of newspaper; a thick Sunday edition will do
- _____ a large towel or cloth to cover each trap on all sides
- _____ small paper plates
- _____ flashlight (if trapping at night or early morning)
- _____ tracking sheet to identify each cat and record information
- _____ pens or pencils for tracking sheet
- _____ extra cat food and water to leave for those cats who have already been TNR'd and those you couldn't trap this time
- _____ hand sanitizer or disposable hand wipes
- _____ gloves, preferably welder's gloves
- _____ garbage bag
- _____ paper towels

PACT Humane Society
Cat Overpopulation Resource Effort (CORE) Program
www.pacthumane.org

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) Checklist

- _____ plastic spoons or forks
- _____ twist ties
- _____ WD-40 or other spray lubricant
- _____ pliers

The Day Before Trapping

_____ **Prepare your vehicle.**

Protect your interior by first laying down a plastic tarp or thick plastic drop-cloth, then cover the plastic with a thick layer of newspaper. Bring along plenty of extra newspaper for subsequent trips.

_____ **Put supplies in your car.**

_____ **Prepare the overnight and/or recovery area.**

The cat(s) will need to recover for 24-48 hours in a secure, dry, warm, isolated place. Depending on the weather, this could be a basement, garage, shed or spare room. Be mindful of the temperature inside the room – if it's too hot or too cold for you, it's probably too hot or cold for the cat.

Spread a large plastic garbage bag on the floor and cover it with several layers of evenly distributed newspaper. When your living quarters must be used, it's a good precaution to spray the room with a flea control product.

Condo and apartment dwellers might consider putting the trap in their bathtub.

- _____ **Reminder:** You must withhold food for at least 12 hours prior to surgery. Fresh water should always be made available.

On Site, Trapping Day

- _____ **Have the large towels or draping cloths and gloves ready for use.**

- _____ **Place traps on level ground and remove twist-ties (if applicable).**

- _____ **Line floor of trap(s) with fresh newspaper.**

- _____ **Cover the rear of the traps.**

Using an old towel, pillowcase or sheet, cover the trap from the center down

PACT Humane Society
Cat Overpopulation Resource Effort (CORE) Program
www.pacthumane.org

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) Checklist

to the rear where the trip plate is. If it's a windy day, use safety pins to secure it down.

_____ **Do not put glass or ceramic bowls in the trap.**

Once trapped, the cat may thrash around in the trap until the trap is completely covered. Any breakable objects pose a serious threat to the cat's safety. A small plastic or wax-covered paper bowl is OK.

_____ **Bait and set the trap(s)**

Use canned sardines in oil, tuna in oil or other smelly food to entice the cats into the trap. If you have been feeding the cats in the trap, place a paper plate with food *under* the trap (in the rear, just beyond the trip plate) so they have to walk over the trip plate to get the food. If you have not been feeding cats in the trap, put very 2-3 small spoonfuls of food in a path leading them from the front to the rear of the trap where the big portion lies beyond the trip plate. Make sure the "baited path" is just enough to whet their appetite.

_____ **Observe the cats and the traps at a distance.**

Do **not** leave set traps unattended. Put on your gloves and get the draping cloths ready while waiting.

_____ **Cover sprung traps with a towel or cloth.**

Immediately after the trap has been sprung, cover the trap on all sides to make the cat feel safe and to calm them down. Remove trapped cats from the feeding location until all cats have been trapped. Discard food & paper plate after trapping or the untrapped cats will feast! Trapped cats should be observed at **all times**.

If you trap a seriously injured cat or sick cat, rush him to the veterinarian immediately.

Immediately release all nursing mother cats.

_____ **Take cat(s) to veterinarian or your home**

Once all the cats have been trapped, gently load them into your vehicle and take them to the veterinarian or to your home for an overnight stay, if applicable.

PACT Humane Society
Cat Overpopulation Resource Effort (CORE) Program
www.pacthumane.org

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) Checklist

Tips for the Trap-Savvy Cat

- Camouflage the trap with branches and/or leaves.
- Line the trap floor with leaves.
- Put the trap in a box, i.e., a vacuum cleaner box.
- If you're withholding food overnight and the cat still doesn't go in the trap, withhold food one more day – but no longer than 2 days.
- Try a variety of foods to entice him/her into the trap.
- If these tips don't work, Alley Cat Allies has instructions for using a drop-trap on their web site at: www.alleycat.org.

Overnight Stay

_____ **Provide the cat fresh water as soon as possible, but no food.**

With the trap's rear panel securely against a wall or other immovable object, slowly approach the trap door and pull the cover back slightly so you can see where the cat is. Do not look the cat in the eye. Talk in a soothing tone. When the cat is in the rear of the trap, open the trap door about 1 ½" – 2" to insert a shallow dish of water. Immediately close the trap door, making sure it's securely locked.

Always wear long sleeves and heavy gloves when opening the door to provide food/water.

_____ **Check in on the cat periodically.**

Twice before bedtime, ensure she has water and that the room's temperature is acceptable. Try not to talk to her during this time, as it will only add to her anxiety. Avoid making eye contact with the cat as it is a sign of aggression.

_____ **Change the newspaper and/or plastic sheet in your car, if necessary.**

At the veterinarian's office

PACT participating veterinarians will first test feral cats for FIV/FelV. Ferals that test positive will be euthanized and cremated. Those that test negative will then be spayed or neutered, given vaccinations for rabies and distemper, and left ear-tipped. Some veterinarians provide the FelV vaccination in the PACT feral cat sterilization package. All of PACT's veterinarians use dissolvable sutures on ferals, so there's no need to trap again to have stitches removed.

PACT Humane Society
Cat Overpopulation Resource Effort (CORE) Program
www.pacthumane.org

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) Checklist

- _____ This is unpleasant, but needs to be stated. Let your veterinarian know if you want to be called before any of your FIV/FelV positive cats are euthanized, if you wish to be with them in their final moments.
- _____ When you arrive home, remove soiled newspaper from your car and replenish with fresh paper for the ride home from the veterinarian.

Recovery Period

Females usually need to be held for 24-48 hours after surgery. Males can be returned to the trapping site 12-24 hours later. A male may need to fight to defend his territory, so he needs to be strong. Cats should be fully alert and well-fed before they're released. They should also have eliminated solid and liquid waste. If a cat needs more than 48 hours to recover, transfer the cat to a holding pen (not a crate!).

Normal behaviors during recovery include deep sleep, head bobbing, wobbly movements, fast breathing, and shivering. Slight bleeding from the left ear tip is normal but should stop by the following day. Abnormal behaviors during recovery include continued bleeding from the surgery area, heavy vomiting, difficulty breathing, not waking up, and grogginess 48 hours after surgery. If a cat displays any of these signs, call your veterinarian immediately.

- _____ **Change the newspaper and/or plastic sheet in your car, if necessary.**
- _____ **Pick up the cat(s) from the veterinarian.**
Ask the veterinarian about the health and approximate age of each cat. Make notations on tracking sheet.
- _____ **Transport the cat(s) to your home for recovery.**
Keep the cat overnight in the same trap, covered with a towel or cloth. Put the trap(s) on the plastic/newspaper lining previously prepared.
- _____ **Provide food & water.**
Water should be made available at all times. Wait until six hours after surgery before providing food. Start out with a small amount of food. Check the food & water supply every 2-3 hours.

PACT Humane Society
Cat Overpopulation Resource Effort (CORE) Program
www.pacthumane.org

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) Checklist

The Big Day

Release the cat in the same place where you trapped him or her. Never, under any circumstances, release the cat into a new area.

_____ **Put food and water down at the regular feeding spot.**

_____ **Release the cat.**

Open the door of the trap, remove the cover and walk away. Let the cat come out when he's ready.

Follow-Up

_____ **Wash trap and return borrowed materials to PACT or other source.**

_____ **Fax your Feral Cat Colony Tracking Sheet to PACT at 630-497-1672.**

_____ **Continue to care for your feral community.**

Refer to PACT's web site at www.pacthumanesociety.org for helpful tips and links.

Aftercare

- Continue to provide fresh food & water at designated feeding stations.
- Remove uneaten food at night to prevent attracting wildlife.
- Provide required veterinary care after TNR.
- Monitor the colony. TNR all new members.
- Waterproof shelters should be provided. Line with straw or wood chips and periodically spray for fleas. The Alley Cat Allies web site has instructions for building an inexpensive cat shelter at www.alleycat.org.

Other ideas for shelter include:

- Wrap a styrofoam cooler in a thick plastic sheet – cut a hole large enough for the cat to enter/exit. Line with straw or wood chips.
- Line a new hooded cat litter box with carpeting, using house insulation for padding; cover air vent with heavy plastic and seal with duct tape; duct tape the bottom to the hood; use heavy cardboard wrapped in plastic to create an “awning” to prevent water & melted snow from dripping / blowing in.