



## Humane Ohio 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, re-locate the cats. Relocation of the cats should only be done as a last resort after you have exhausted all possibilities. Cats are territorial animals and form strong bonds with the location they inhabit. A food source exists in the area and the cats are acclimated to local conditions. Relocating outdoor community cats is a difficult, time-consuming, and challenging undertaking. Humane Ohio's fact sheet titled "Safe Relocation of Outdoor Community Cats" may be useful to you. This sheet can be found at [www.humaneohio.org](http://www.humaneohio.org) – click on "Other Resources" and then "Fact/Help Sheets" (or ask our staff to provide a copy).

\_\_\_\_\_ **Identify the feeders.**

Identify all parties who are already feeding the cat(s) and let them know you are planning to do 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.**

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 there are any friendly cats – can they be adopted? Are there any kittens that can be socialized and adopted?

\_\_\_\_\_ **Obtain a trap.**

Get one humane trap for each cat. Traps are available for a refundable deposit at Humane Ohio. 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.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Make a spay/neuter appointment.**

Once you have assessed the colony and are ready to trap, make appointments with Humane Ohio's low-cost spay/neuter clinic, or call or download the Outdoor Community Cat Guidelines in the Scheduling section of our Web site for information about walk-in appointments.

## The Day Before Trapping

Reminder: If the cat is over four months old, you must withhold food after midnight the night before the spay/neuter surgery. Cats less than four months old can have food up until 6 am on the morning of their spay/neuter surgery. All cats can have water.

### \_\_\_\_\_ **Prepare your supplies:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ one can of tuna, sardines in oil, or canned food per cat
- \_\_\_\_\_ can opener (if canned bait 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 through the TNR process and those you couldn't trap this time
- \_\_\_\_\_ hand sanitizer or disposable hand wipes
- \_\_\_\_\_ gloves
- \_\_\_\_\_ garbage bag
- \_\_\_\_\_ paper towels
- \_\_\_\_\_ plastic spoons or forks
- \_\_\_\_\_ twist ties

### \_\_\_\_\_ **Prepare your vehicle.**

Protect your interior by 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.**

Humane Ohio keeps cats overnight for one night. Male cats can be released back into the colony the day following neuter surgery. However, Humane Ohio recommends, if possible, keeping a female cat in a safe, temperature controlled placed for one extra day for a total of 48 hours. Female cats that were pregnant may need to be kept longer based on our veterinarian's recommendation. If you have a double door trap, open the back door that slides open a crack and slide the food and water in. You can also pour food and water through the wire cage if there are already bowls inside the trap.

Spread a large plastic garbage bag on the floor and cover it with several layers of evenly distributed newspaper. Condo and apartment dwellers might consider putting the trap in their bathtub.

## On Site, Trapping Day

- \_\_\_\_\_ **Have the large towels or draping cloths and your gloves ready for use.**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Line floor of trap(s) with fresh newspaper.**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Bait, set and cover the rear of the trap(s).**  
Use canned sardines in oil, tuna in oil or other smelly food to entice the cats into the trap. Put 2 – 3 very small spoonfuls of food in a path leading them from the front to the rear of the trap where you can place a paper plate with food **under** the trap (in the rear, just past the trip plate) so they have to walk over the trip plate to get the food. (Discard food & paper plate after trapping.) 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 trapped cats with a towel or cloth.**  
Immediately after the trap has been sprung, cover the trap on all sides to make the cat feel safe. Remove trapped cats from the feeding location until all cats have been trapped. (Trapped cats should be observed at **all times**.) If you trap a seriously injured cat or sick cat, rush him to the veterinarian.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Take cat(s) to your home (or where you will have them stay overnight).**  
Once all cats have been trapped, gently load them into your vehicle and take them to your home or wherever you will hold them safely overnight.

### 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 Rubbermaid container with a hole cut out.
- Withhold food the night before you trap to make the cat hungry and more likely to go into the trap after the food you put in there. If the cat still doesn't go into the trap, you can withhold food for one more day, **but no longer than three days**.
- Try a variety of foods to entice him/her into the trap.
- If all else fails, use a drop trap (a large and lightweight frame covered with netting). It is propped up on one side with a stick, and food is placed in the back. The trapper stands at a distance, holding a string attached to the stick. When the cat walks underneath to eat, the trapper pulls the string, allowing the trap to drop and capture the cat(s). The trapper immediately covers the drop trap with a blanket to calm the cat(s) and then carefully transfers her into an individual trap.
  - Visit the Neighborhood Cats Web site at [www.neighborhoodcats.org](http://www.neighborhoodcats.org) or the Alley Cat Allies Web site at [www.alleycat.org](http://www.alleycat.org) for more info about drop traps (the direct link to drop trap info on ACA's site is <http://www.alleycat.org/page.aspx?pid=366>).

### Overnight Stay

- \_\_\_\_\_ **Provide the cat with fresh water as soon as possible, but no food.**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Check in on the cat periodically, and twice before bedtime.**  
Ensure she has water and that the room's temperature is acceptable. Try not to talk to her because it will add to her anxiety, and avoid making eye contact with her because it is a sign of aggression.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Change the newspaper and/or plastic sheet in your car, if necessary.**

## At the spay/neuter clinic

The cat(s) will be spayed or neutered, given vaccinations (if requested), left ear-tipped and tattooed. Humane Ohio uses dissolvable sutures on outdoor community cats, so there's no need to trap again to have stitches removed.

## Recovery Period

When an outdoor community cat is spayed/neutered, he needs to stay overnight at the vet clinic or in a home where he can be monitored for a least one night. If you choose to keep the cat in your home or garage, keep him in his trap with clean newspaper underneath. Keep the trap covered with a sheet or towel and leave him alone, except to check on him. Avoid reaching into the cage unless absolutely necessary and wear protective gear if you must do so. A feral cat that is coming out of anesthesia may still react fiercely by scratching and/or biting.

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Normal behaviors during recovery include deep sleep, head bobbing, wobbly movements, fast breathing and shivering. Bleeding from the left eartip is also normal but should stop by the following day. Abnormal behaviors during recovery include continued bleeding from the surgery area, vomiting, difficulty breathing, not waking up and grogginess for more than 48 hours after surgery. If a cat displays any of these abnormal behaviors, call the clinic that performed the surgery immediately.

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

\_\_\_\_\_ **Pick up the cat(s) from the clinic.**

Ask about the health and approximate age of each cat. Make notations on your 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 and water.**

Water should be made available at all times. Wait until two hours after the spay/neuter surgery before providing food. Do not reach into the trap other than to provide food and do so very carefully. If you have a double door trap, open the back door that slides open a crack and slide the food and water in. You can also pour food and water through the wire cage if there are already bowls inside the trap. Check the food and water supply every 2 – 3 hours.

## The Big Day

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

## Follow-Up

\_\_\_\_\_ **Wash the trap and return any borrowed materials to Humane Ohio.**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Continue to care for your outdoor community cat colony.**

Alley Cat Allies is an excellent resource for outdoor community cat caretakers. Their Web site is [www.alleycat.org](http://www.alleycat.org). More tips are below in the "Aftercare" section.

## Aftercare

- Continue to provide fresh food and water at designated feeding stations.
- Remove uneaten food at night so you don't attract wildlife.
- Provide required veterinary care after TNR.
- Monitor the colony. TNR all new members.
- Provide waterproof shelters. Line with straw or wood chips and periodically spray for fleas. Visit the Outdoor Community Cats section of Humane Ohio's Web site for instructions on how to make a very simple, effective shelter out of Rubbermaid containers (available for sale at Humane Ohio!).

Other ideas for outdoor community cat shelters:

- Wrap a styrofoam cooler in a thick plastic sheet. Cut a hole large enough for the cat to enter/exit.
- Line a new hooded cat litter box with carpeting. Use 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 and melted snow from dripping/blowing in.
- Turn a large Rubbermaid tub upside down. Cut a hole in side (hole shouldn't be too big or other animals will be able to fit in it).
- Find a strong box or crate. Insulate it with waterproof material thick enough to keep out wind and cold.
- Purchase an "igloo" style dog house, available at most pet supply stores or sometimes on Craigslist.

Notes about outdoor community cat shelters:

- Fill shelter with straw (NOT hay!) or wood chips.
- Blankets/towels retain moisture so bedding should be made from hard wood or synthetic material.
- Shelter should be placed on wooden pallet or bricks to raise off the ground and prevent rotting.