



Feral Trapping Tips

Preparation

- Before using the trap, attach two small, flat containers (such as the cut-off bottoms of water bottles) in the back of the trap slightly above the floor by means of pieces of wire or cable ties.
- Rinse the trap out beforehand in a weak solution of bleach (i.e. 1 teaspoon Jic on a bucket of water) to prevent diseases from being spread from one cat to the next. Long-handled brushes such as back brushes work well, and it helps to set the trap on its back to reach inside more easily.
- Check that your trap mechanism is working properly, and if necessary oil the sliding surfaces with cooking oil.
- During the week or two before trapping, try to get the cats used to coming to eat at a specific time by feeding them "soft" food every day at that time.
- Don't feed them at all the day before the trapping, except perhaps a small amount 24 hours before.

The trapping itself

- If possible, use the "stick method" instead of the automatic method. This entails not setting the trap on automatic, but propping the door of the trap open with a sturdy stick to which you've attached a long string. This gives you far more control over the process and enables you to trap more than one cat at a time. By ensuring that no other cats observe the proceedings, you can also prevent other cats from being scared off by what happens to those cats that are trapped.
- Use strong smelling soft food as bait, e.g. Whiskas "Meatloaf and Pilchards", fishy food (not the kind in tomato sauce) or Kentucky fried chicken. Place a teaspoon full in the mouth of the trap to lure the cat in, and the rest in one of the dishes you've attached to the back of the trap or in a disposable flat dish right at the back.
- When the trap has been set, test whether the door of the trap is working properly and won't catch on anything, and whether the stick will slide out smoothly.

- Cover the trap partly with a towel or blanket, in such a way that neither the front nor the back of the trap is covered, but only the sides.
- Once the trap is ready, do not call the cat or show in any way that you want it to enter the trap, since this will simply rouse its suspicion. Pretend that you don't care whether it goes in or not, and try not to stare too intently!
- Try not to trap a cat while other cats (that also need to be trapped) are on the outside looking on. When cats witness other cats being trapped, they learn from it and will avoid the trap when you try to trap them in future. Be patient and wait for the ideal situation!
- As soon as the cat has been trapped, approach the cat from the side to enable it to hide behind the towel or blanket that is already in place. Cover the trap completely with the towel or blanket. (The towel or blanket should remain in place at the vet's as well. I believe, however, that cats prefer not being covered entirely, but having a small peep-hole to investigate their surroundings.)
- If the door of the trap is inclined to slide open, secure it now with a piece of string or wire.
- *Before leaving the premises*, examine the cat for lactation, to determine whether it is suckling. (Place the trap on a higher surface and try to get a good look at its tummy.) If the cat is lactating, it should ideally not be removed from its young, however since it may be impossible to re-trap at a later date, have it sterilised as soon as possible and ask the veterinary surgeon to administer a reversal of the anaesthesia at the end of the operation. Release the female four hours later to enable her to return to her young.
- In the car, play soothing music such as Bach or some other Baroque or soft instrumental music. 😊
- When delivering the trap to the vet, provide the vet with cardboard lids such as those from boxes of typing paper to use as litter boxes. (While the cat is sedated, the food and water dishes can be filled and the "litter boxes" placed in the traps. These need not be removed when the cat is picked up the next day, although you may want to suck the water out of the water dish using a syringe.) Point out to the vet if the door of the trap should be re-secured with wire or string after the cat has been "done".
- When picking the cat up from the vet, check as best you can whether everything is in order with the cat's wound. There should be almost no blood on the newspapers or other bedding, for example. If you can manage a peek at the wound itself, so much the better!
- **Unless a reversal has been administered, release the cat on the day following the sterilisation only!**

How to trap a wary cat

If a cat is wary of a trap, leave a trap at or near the cat's feeding station for at least a week. (Chain it to something if there is a danger of theft.) Then do the following:

- At first, remove the trap door if it is a loose one, or if it is attached to the trap, tie it up so that there is no chance of it slamming shut.
- Sprinkle Happy Cat (obtainable from some vets and shops and from the internet) inside and around the trap to help set the cat at ease.
- Offer the cat yummy, strong-smelling food, but place the food dish **outside** the trap for the first day or two.
- Then begin placing the food dish inside the trap, but just beyond the mouth of the trap, so that the cat can eat while his or her body remains outside. In this way, move the food deeper and deeper into the trap without trying to trap the cat.
- Once the cat is comfortably eating inside the trap, set the trap in the usual way, if possible using the stick method (see above).