

Trapping 101

What to do if you have feral or stray cats

1. Assess the situation

How many cats? How many kittens? How old are they?
Make a list of cats by color so you can check them off as they are fixed.
Are they wild or friendly (feral or abandoned pet)?
Are you feeding them regularly?

2. What are your goals?

Spay/neuter cats to prevent further kittens from being born?
Trap kittens to be socialized?

3. Make appointments to have your cats spayed & neutered

Contact clinic or shelter to make a date. Check with OCC for low cost options.
If using the Return to Home program at IHS you will not need an appointment.
Kittens- Must be 2# or 8 weeks to be fixed.
If you are in Ada county, kittens can be surrendered to IHS.
If you are NOT in Ada county, depending on their age, you will need to make arrangements for TNR, Fostering &/or taming after being fixed.

4. Borrow traps 4-5 days before the appointments.

You MUST have a spay/neuter appointment/plan to borrow our traps.
Contact our Trap Manager to make an appointment for pick up of traps.
Manager will teach you how to use the traps, including as “feeder traps”.
Practice setting traps multiple times to be sure they work.

5. FEEDER TRAPS:

If you are using them as feeder traps for 4-5 days before trapping day:
Place the traps in a place the traps can remain until the cats are trapped.
Traps can be set side by side or in various places on the property.
Tie the front flap open with zip ties, heavy string or a bungee cord.
Place a towel/cover over the traps. Cats like to go in tunnels.
Feed the cats in the traps and ONLY in the traps, using the back door to feed.
Feed the cats at the same time everyday.
If the cats don't want to go in, begin by placing the food just inside the trap and then move the food further back each time you feed.

6. Day of trapping:

Untie the flap and set a small amount of food in the back of the trap at the normal feeding time. Place a piece of cardboard or towel in front half of trap for them to sit on.
Put carabiner on back door to make sure it can't open once food is in.
Leave the traps alone. (Watch from inside or farther from traps so they will go in.)
If trapping multiple cats, leave the trapped cats where they are until all are trapped.
If trapping a mother and kittens, use a blanket over all of the traps so they can see each other from inside. Change from the blanket to individual towels covering traps when transporting traps to keep them calm.
Once trapped, cats will be upset at first, but usually settle down and become quiet.
If cat is particularly aggressive, carefully secure front door of trap with a zip tie.
If you don't trap them all, if weather is mild, leave the traps set into the night.
Cats are nocturnal and they will probably go in them in the night. Check traps before going to bed.

Never leave a trapped cat in the sun or hot/cold temperatures.

Target trapping for difficult to catch cats or kittens- Place a water bottle with long heavy string tied to bottom under front of trap door. Sit back and wait for desired cat to go in and pull the string. The trap door will shut and you will have your desired cat.

7. Once trapped:

Check the cats ears to make sure that you haven't trapped a previously fixed cat that has an ear tip or notch, especially if you have already been trapping in this location. Place a tarp on the floor of a sheltered place where they will remain for the night. Do NOT put directly on cold concrete. Use a rug or towels under the tarp or set on a table. Move each trap, which is covered with a towel, carefully one by one onto the tarp in a protected area. The covered trap helps to lower their anxiety level.

8. Day of spay/neuter:

Put tarp in car (they are likely to go to the bathroom, so protect your vehicle).

Place cats in car with towels covering the traps.

Be on time; clinics start on time and close their doors. If late, they won't take you.

If at IHS for the Return to Home program you can take the cats in at any time.

Daily 8-5:30 (Be sure to wait for them to bring your trap back to you at IHS, RTH).

Check into clinic before bringing cats in to fill out paperwork.

Decide if you want vaccinations or flea/tick treatment, wormer or microchip before you fill out paperwork. Additional fees for these may apply, including extra pain meds.

Bring cats/kittens into the building and put them where instructed.

Check to see when the pick up time is.

9. After surgery:

Pick cats up at agreed upon time.

Put cats into a sheltered and warm area for the night.

Give cats water and a small bit of food. Only open the back door a tiny bit by carefully sliding the back door open... just enough to slide food/water in.

You can give them more food later in the evening as the anesthetic wears off.

Be sure to re-lock the back door with the carabiner.

Keep them in the traps overnight. Females need 24 or more hours until release.

After surgery, cats are unable to regulate their body temperature and are also a little like drunken sailors, vulnerable to predators, so it is important that you keep them sequestered for the night. They need to rest in a quiet, safe warm place.

10. Kittens:

If you have trapped kittens who are to be tamed, they can now be put in a kennel for taming or taken to a foster or shelter as previously arranged.

11. Releasing fixed cats:

When the morning weather warms up, 24 hours after pickup, it is time to release your cat/s. Males can be released in the morning if it is warm, but females need extra time.

Line traps up near the cats hiding place (outbuilding? Front porch?) with towels on.

Once all traps are lined up, one by one, open the back door. If the cat doesn't run out right away, slowly remove the towel. Don't rush them... it's stressful enough for them.

12. Traps:

Hose out traps and then spray with a solution of 10% bleach & water. You may need to use a brush on the trap to remove feces.

Wash towels, adding a little bleach. Do not use dryer sheets. (cats don't like the smell).

Contact our trap manager to set up a drop off time.

Please return traps within two days of your appointment.

THANK YOU for being willing to help these unfortunate animals. Your efforts count!