

**Withhold food:** feral cats tend to be wary of anything new in their environment, and traps are a narrow, confined space. We recommend withholding food from the colony the day before trapping, to make the bait in the traps even more enticing and increase the chances of cats entering the traps.

**Alternate method:** some TNR groups employ an “acclimation” technique. The back doors of the traps are removed (or if back doors are not removeable, the entrance door is zip-tied open) and the traps are placed, UNSET, within the colony’s territory. For 3-7 days, the colony cats are fed ONLY within the traps. Any leftover food must be removed from the traps after feeding time, and no feeding can take place outside the traps. This method is more labor-intensive, but may be utilized if the caretaker sees fit.

**Preparing the traps:** when it comes to bait, the smellier the better! We recommend canned fish for best results: tuna, sardines, mackerel are all good choices. If those are unavailable, canned cat food will often work, as well as cooked chicken. (Many trappers swear by KFC chicken skin!) Traps should be baited on the far end (not the door end) so that the cat moves forward over the trip plate and snaps the trap shut. We often use halved or quartered paper plates to hold the bait. Traps should also be lined with newspaper, to help protect the cats’ feet from the wire as they spend the night in the cage and to protect the surfaces below them while they are being held. Be sure the back panels of the traps are firmly secured (especially if you have utilized the alternate method above,) and be sure the catch hook that holds the opening works properly.

**Trap placement:** bait and set the traps and place all the traps at the same time, in the area the cats are usually fed. If possible, try not to place traps out in the open, instead keeping them near something to help stabilize them—a wall, a fence, a curb, etc. Place them on as level ground as you can find; additional newspaper or towels can be used to stabilize traps that are too wobbly. Once you’ve placed the traps, you can further increase the chances of successful trapping by sprinkling a line of dry cat food, treats, or even juice from the canned fish bait in a little trail leading to the trap. Some trappers will also place a towel or sheet over the traps at this time to create a the sort of “hidey-hole” impression that cats love, and to make covering the trap faster. Ideally this cloth will cover the whole trap when adjusted after trapping. (See below.)

**Now we wait:** *DO NOT LEAVE TRAPS UNATTENDED!* You don’t need to sit right beside them, but do not set them and disappear for the night. Keep an eye on the area from a distance and let the cats explore the traps. They will likely be hungry if you’ve withheld their regular feeding, and are likely to be quite interested in your bait. If you are trapping on your own property it’s perfectly fine to keep an eye on them from inside your house. If you’re trapping away from a building, you can easily position a vehicle to give you a vantage point.

**We got one!** like any cat, a feral cat will often react to both the sound of being trapped and the fact of being trapped by frantically trying to escape. If you have not already done so, now is the time to toss a sheet or towel over the trap. It should completely cover the trap if possible. CAREFULLY lift the trap BY THE HANDLE ONLY, and quickly move it to your holding area. Once in the holding area, you can briefly

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lift the sheet or towel to check to make sure the cat is not a previously-trapped feral (or an opossum. It happens. A lot.) If the cat is ear-tipped (or is an opossum,) carefully carry the trap back to the trapping area, release the animal within, and re-bait and re-set the trap if desired.

**Overnight holding:** keep cats in a warm, dry, quiet place overnight. You may want to lay down a tarp or something similar to place the cages on, as the cats will be spending the night in their cages and will almost certainly make something of a mess. Because we trap the night before surgeries, there is no need to feed or water the cats. The best thing you can do is check to be sure they're okay, and then leave them be.

**Transport:** if NACC is providing transportation for cats trapped on your property, scheduling will be done between the caregiver/trapper and the transporter. If you are doing the transporting yourself, please arrive at Pocomoke Animal Hospital no later than 8:15am on Tuesday. Cats can be picked up at 3:30pm on Tuesday. NOTE, MAY 2020: due to current restrictions, PAH asks that you call them when you arrive and wait in the parking lot! They will come out to retrieve the cats from you. This process will happen in reverse for pick-up.

**Recovery:** the cats will be groggy from anesthesia. They may even hallucinate. Keep the traps covered and transport them to your recovery area. The recovery area should be warm and dry (it is vitally important that cats stay warm after anesthesia, or they can go into shock,) and ideally lined with tarps, etc. Observe the cats in the cage for any signs of complications. When they start to look less "out of it," you may offer water. If they can keep water down, you can offer a SMALL amount of food. Feeding and watering cats within traps is best accomplished with a trap fork, and is usually a two-person job. We can show you how this is done, but if this is something you do not feel comfortable doing at all, that's completely understandable! Let us know ahead of time, and we will try to coordinate an experienced volunteer to come do a round of feeding and watering of the trapped cats.

**Release:** cats should be held at least until Wednesday morning, to be sure they are recovered enough to fend for themselves and to check for post-surgical complications. You may wish to hold females a bit longer than males, but this is a caregiver's decision. Always release the cats back where they were trapped! Take the covered trap back to the trapping location, place it with the latched door/panel facing away from you (on NACC traps, this will be the zip-tied end,) unclip the door/panel (or cut the zip tie,) and slide the door/panel up. If the cat does not immediately leave the trap, do NOT stick anything in the trap to try to coax it out! Simply move some distance away; the cat will leave when they feel it is safe to do so.

**Trap care:** remove all soiled newspaper, food containers, etc. and clean the traps with soapy water. Rinse well and let dry. If you will be trapping again in the near future, store the traps in a dry place and repeat the process as outlined above for your next trapping date. If you will not be trapping in the near future, please contact NACC to coordinate pick-up of the traps.

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**Above all: *BE SAFE!*** Be safe for the cats, and be safe for you. Never stick your fingers in a trap. Be careful carrying the traps and only carry by the handle, held a bit away from your body. If you are somehow bitten or scratched, seek medical attention—and do not release the cat that got you! Animal control will want the animal for quarantine or testing.

If you have any questions about this process or need further information, please don't hesitate to contact NACC.

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