

Help Community Cats: A Step-by-Step Guide to Trap-Neuter Return

People all over the country, from all walks of life, care for outdoor cats every day. Like them, you've discovered cats in your community, and you want to help them. The millions of cats who make their homes outdoors are called community cats. You may also hear them called feral cats, though not all unowned, outdoor cats are feral.

Community cats are domestic cats—the same species as pet cats, *Felis Catus*. The difference is that community cats are unowned and generally not socialized to people, so they cannot be adopted. But community cats are not homeless. They have a home: the outdoors.

TNR is the humane, effective approach to outdoor cat populations.

The best way you can help community cats is through Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR). TNR ensures no new kittens are born, stabilizes cat populations, provides vaccines, and improves cats' lives. It also stops the behaviors and stresses associated with mating such as yowling, spraying, and fighting.

TNR is Mainstream

TNR is practiced across the United States and all over the world. It's

considered best practice and is good public policy.

TNR is supported by all credible animal protection organizations including the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA), the National Animal Care and Control Association (NACA), as well as hundreds of TNR groups nationwide, and the countless individuals who carry out grassroots TNR programs.

What Is Trap-Neuter-Return?

Trap-Neuter-Return is the only humane and effective approach to community cat populations. Here are the three basic steps to this lifesaving process:

- 1. Trap:** Humanely trap all the cats in a colony. A colony is a group of cats living outdoors together.
- 2. Neuter (or spay):** Take the cats in their traps to a veterinarian or clinic to be neutered, vaccinated, and eartipped (the universal symbol of a neutered and vaccinated cat. Learn more at alleycat.org/Eartip).
- 3. Return:** After the cats recover, return them to their outdoor home where they were trapped.

Watch videos of cats being returned and how to do Trap-Neuter-Return at youtube.com/AlleyCatAllies.

Helping Cats 101: Don't Bring Cats to the Shelter

Cats don't belong in shelters. And these days, most shelters agree.

If you're like a lot of people, your first instinct when you find a cat in need is to call animal control or perhaps rush the cat to your local animal shelter. Depending on your local policies, doing either of these things may put the cat's life in danger. In some areas, when cats are brought into shelters, it is a death sentence.

Because community cats are generally not socialized to people, they are unadoptable—which historically has meant that most of them were killed in shelters. Nationally, positive outcomes for cats brought to shelters, even friendly cats, though improving, remain abysmally low.

The good news is that an increasing number of animal shelters and animal control agencies are embracing humane policies for cats. Many are supporting community TNR efforts or creating TNR programs of their own, sometimes referred to as Shelter-Neuter-Return (SNR), Return to Field (RTF) or Feral Freedom. That's why it is important to know YOUR local shelter's policies for community cats.

Learn more at alleycat.org/AnimalShelters.

This [guide](#) teaches you how to help cats effectively and humanely.

You've come to the right place. Alley Cat Allies is the global engine of change for cats. We protect and improve cats' lives through our innovative, cutting-edge programs. We are seen around the world as a champion for the humane treatment of all cats. We work toward a world where every cat is valued and protected and every community and shelter has policies and programs to save their lives.

Since 1990, Alley Cat Allies has helped hundreds of thousands of individuals, shelters, and organizations worldwide improve the lives of cats by providing guidance on how to implement TNR and educating communities about the benefits of TNR. This guide will give you the knowledge and confidence needed to join the thousands of compassionate people around the world working to help community cats!

We recommend you [read this entire guide](#) and find answers to your questions before you begin trapping.

Alley Cat Allies' Feral Friends Network®

A member of Alley Cat Allies' Feral Friends Network may be able to aid or guide you in helping community cats. You may even be able to participate in TNR with a Feral Friends Network Member to see TNR in practice before you begin trapping on your own. Members have different areas of expertise, such as advising on TNR, loaning out humane traps, or providing veterinary services like spay and neuter for community cats.

Request a list of Feral Friends Network members in your area at alleycat.org/FindFeralFriends.

STEP 1: Preparation for Trapping Cats

Some front-end tips to keep in mind:

Community cats are generally wary of people.

This fact should influence every choice you make when trapping. Cats often feel frightened and threatened when faced with a new experience

and being trapped and transported to a veterinarian can be overwhelming for them. This is also true for cats who normally are docile around their caregivers.

Even pet cats can become nervous in new situations like this! Community cats cannot communicate their needs or if they are hurt or frightened. Instead, they may thrash about to try to escape their traps, or simply “shut down.” It is essential that you stay quiet, calm, and conscious of the well-being of the cats during your trapping ventures.

A community cat enters a humane box trap.

TNR improves cats' lives and benefits the community.

Every trapping effort is different.

Every colony location—whether a college campus, warehouse, farm, alley, small business parking lot, or other space—will have unique elements for you to consider.

Use your discretion and common sense to determine any additional steps to those provided in this guide, and tailor the basics to fit your situation. For instance, you may need to work with college administrators, connect with other caregivers, or ensure you have enough traps and vehicles for a large colony.

Most importantly, PLAN before you set out to trap cats.

Take time to feel comfortable and confident. Review all the TNR steps and scenarios in this booklet and online and create your own guide for

your situation. Having a solid plan will help you stay calm when trapping, which ensures that the cats stay as safe and stress-free as possible.

Remember: you're doing what is best for the cats. Keep in mind that carrying out TNR will significantly improve cats' lives. See a sample timeline for a Trap-Neuter-Return effort at alleycat.org/TNRTimeline.

Never attempt to pick up or handle a community cat—even a kitten.

You risk injury to yourself and the cat. (Caution: A cat with no vaccination record could be killed for rabies testing if a person is bitten!)

Only use a humane box trap or drop trap to trap a community cat.

(Never use darts or tranquilizers.) Examples of a box trap and drop trap can be found below. In addition, you can look at and learn more about traps and other helpful TNR equipment at alleycat.org/Equipment.

Make plans and attempt to trap ALL cats and kittens during your first trapping session.

This is important because the more times cats are exposed to the trapping process, the more suspicious they become of traps.

Getting to Know the Cats and People in Your Neighborhood

Educate your neighbors.

Before doing TNR, it's important to learn as much as you can, both

through observation and speaking with your neighbors.

The better armed you are with a solid understanding of the community cats in your neighborhood—how many of them are there, what sorts of relationships do they seem to have with each other, what sort of relationships they have with other people, etc.—the greater the odds that your first foray into TNR is a success.

Your curiosity saves cats.

If you are like most people, you didn't start out thinking you'd like to find cats in your neighborhood, trap them and help them by getting them spayed or neutered. Instead, you spotted a cat or a couple of cats. You became curious about them. Likely, you kept seeing them, maybe started feeding them.

Somewhere along the line, based on what you were observing (such as, no collar) you began to think that they were not anyone's pet cats, but rather community cats. As your interest in them and their well-being grew, you learned more about them. All of this is good, normal, and very helpful.

Shift your focus from the cats to those living near them.

Once you've determined there are community cats in your neighborhood that have not been through a TNR program (this is easy to tell as their ears will not have the distinctive eartip given to cats who have been spayed/neutered and vaccinated) and you've decided you'd like to do TNR, you need to shift some of your focus away—briefly—from the cats to the people who live near to them.

Many of your neighbors will have likely noticed—and developed

affection for—the cats you plan to trap.

They might well become upset if you trap the cats and take them away without explaining what you are doing first. Some of your neighbors may feed or otherwise care for the cats without you knowing.

Coordination with them is not only polite, but also on a practical level it will help with trapping if you can encourage them to not feed the cats in the run-up to the day of trapping.

In a friendly, positive way, reach out to the people who live and work near the colony location.

Stop by their homes and shops, introduce yourself, let them know you plan to help the neighborhood community cats and explain what TNR is and when you plan to do it. Door hangers can be found in our Shop (alleycat.org/shop) for you to drop off explaining what you plan to do, when and why.

Communicate and education those around you.

Creating open lines for communication and education are vital parts of conducting TNR. People may have concerns because they are not aware that community cats live and thrive outdoors or that spaying/neutering improves their lives. They also may have problems with the cats that can easily be addressed. Even if they have issues with the cats, they likely don't want to see them harmed.

Be the contact.

By introducing yourself as the person to contact for questions or concerns, you can prevent potential issues from escalating and endangering the cats. Learn more about helping cats and people

coexist at alleycat.org/CommunityRelations.

Get caregiver buy-in.

If there are signs the cats have other caregivers (for example: food, water bowls, or shelters in the area), consider leaving your contact information under a food bowl. In the note, be sure to mention you are there to help the cats. If there are other caregivers, engage with them about your plans. Their cooperation could be critical to your success.

Cat Colony Tracking System

Use Alley Cat Allies' Community Cat Colony Tracking System (alleycat.org/Tracking) to record the number of cats in a colony and a brief description of each (See our Cat Identification Guide at alleycat.org/IDGuide), including health status. Include photos of each cat, if possible.

Tip: Our outreach materials can help you talk to your neighbors about community cats and TNR. Find them in our online shop in English, Spanish, and French: alleycat.org/Shop.

Be Prepared for Special Scenarios – Know Before You Go

Kittens

You may come across kittens in your trapping efforts. If the kittens look healthy, it is a strong indicator that their mother is not far away even if you don't see her. The best place for kittens is with their mother, so you should Leave Them Be™. When mother cat and kittens are ready that can be spayed or neutered and returned to their outdoor home. Learn

more at alleycat.org/LeaveThemBe.

Nursing Mothers

If you have trapped a cat and realize she is a nursing mother, don't panic. Spay the mother and return her as soon as possible (in ONE day), based on the instructions of your veterinarian. She will return to her kittens and be able to continue nursing.

Pregnant Cats

If a cat is already pregnant, she can still be spayed. Check with your veterinarian to see if they are experienced with this type of surgery ahead of time.

Ill or Injured Cats

Plan ahead to ensure you can provide immediate care to, and make decisions about, any ill or injured cats you trap. Have the phone number of a veterinarian who works with community cats on hand, as well as one whose practice will be open while you are trapping. Build up an emergency fund to help cover unexpected expenses so you are prepared to get a cat immediate medical treatment if necessary.

What if a cat is friendly?

Community cats differ in how friendly, (socialized), they are to people. For example, many community cats are unsocialized and avoid contact with people, while some community cats may allow their caregiver to pet them, but avoid strangers. You can learn about cat socialization at alleycat.org/StrayOrFeral.

You may wish to try to find foster or adoptive homes to get some of

the highly socialized cats adopted, but please know that adoption is not a necessity for socialized community cats. Regardless of level of socialization, if a cat is living and thriving outdoors now, he or she will continue to do so once returned to their outdoor home. Many community cats are deeply bonded to the other cats in their colony and returning to them will be in their best interest.

Establish a Feeding Schedule

To get the cats used to coming out and eating while you are there (and help with your assessment process), establish a set time and place to feed the cats every day. Feed the cats as much as they can eat in a 30-minute period, and then pick up any remaining food after that period. If you have a feeding station, make sure it is positioned in an area that is free of human traffic and inconspicuous.

Remember to coordinate your feeding and trapping efforts with other caregivers. This will make the best use of your time and resources.

Tip: To make your TNR effort easier, put the food for the cats in unset traps for one to two weeks prior to the trapping day. (Take the back door off entirely) This will get the cats comfortable with seeing and walking into traps.

Do not put food anywhere else but inside the trap, and remove the back door or secure the door of the trap so it stays open. Remove the traps after the cats eat so there are no risks of theft, damage, or trapping a cat accidentally.

Finding and Working with a Spay and Neuter Clinic

Work with a veterinarian or a spay and neuter clinic with community cat experience. Thirty years into our movement, the good news is that there are hundreds of spay and neuter clinics across the United States. If you have trouble finding one near you, our Feral Friends Network members at is a great resource.

Go to alleycat.org/FindFeralFriends to request a list of Feral Friends Network members in your area.

Or you can work with your own veterinarian. If they are unfamiliar with community cats but want to learn, please direct them to our comprehensive community cat veterinary resource center at alleycat.org/Veterinarian.

Consider the following to help you choose your veterinarian or clinic and prepare them for the cats' neuter surgeries:

1. Prices

Ask for the exact charge for spaying and neutering, vaccines, eartip, and other treatments. Some clinics provide many services for a flat rate. Others itemize all the services they provide and may charge extra for any treatments related to surgery, such as anesthesia and pain medication.

2. Appointment Policies

Make sure the clinic understands the unpredictable nature of trapping cats. You may intend to trap six cats, but only end up trapping four. Conversely, you may think there are only six cats to be trapped, but then discover a seventh as you are trapping. It's important that the clinic is flexible to accommodating a few more or less cats than

expected.

3. Testing Protocols

Fewer and fewer animal shelters and veterinary professionals test cats for Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) and Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV) as a matter of course, recognizing that they are incurable viruses that only affect cats. Not all cats who become infected with FIV will develop the disease, and even those who do live full lives.

Humans cannot catch or transmit these viruses. Community cats are no more likely to be infected with the virus than owned cats and will live healthy lives outdoors. In fact, pet cats and community cats contract FeLV and FIV at an equally low rate of about 4 percent. Many spay and neuter clinics do not test for FeLV or FIV, a position we support.

Alley Cat Allies has long advocated against routinely testing cats for FIV and FeLV. We recommend you check with the clinic to which you are thinking of bringing cats for spaying and neutering and confirming that they do not test for FIV or FeLV.

Learn more about FeLV and FIV testing at alleycat.org/FeLV-FIV.

4. Vaccines

The cat will get a rabies and FVRCP vaccine. FVRCP is a three-in-one combination vaccine protecting cats from rhinotracheitis, calicivirus and panleukopenia (also known as feline distemper). Other vaccines are not necessary.

5. Eartipping

Check that the clinic understands the importance of eartipping, and

knows how to perform the procedure. Eartipping is the painless removal of the tip of a cat's left ear (approximately 3/8") while they are under anesthesia. An eartip is the universal identifier of a spayed or neutered and vaccinated community cat, and lets people know that the cat is healthy and should be left alone.

Learn more about eartipping and find veterinary instructions at alleycat.org/Eartip.

6. Microchipping

Veterinarians should always scan cats for microchips immediately. By scanning for microchips, you may help reunite a stray cat with a family that misses them! Alley Cat Allies strongly recommends microchipping all the community cats who are part of your TNR effort.

Microchipping is a great way to keep track of the cats in a colony, and it helps ensure that you'll be contacted if the cats are ever brought into a veterinary office or animal shelter by someone else. Microchips may save the lives of your community cats if they are ever brought in to a shelter.

Learn more at alleycat.org/MicrochipsSaveLives.

7. Ill or Injured Cats

Know the clinic's policies concerning cats who need extra medical attention. Make sure you know how much they will charge for treatments, and that they call you before making any decisions about unexpected procedures for the cats. Ensure you are given the ultimate decision regarding humane euthanasia, if necessary.

8. Kittens

Does the clinic have age or weight requirements for spaying or neutering kittens? Ask for the clinic's kitten surgery protocol. Kittens can be safely spayed or neutered if they are healthy and weigh at least 2 pounds.

To learn more about pediatric spay and neuter, go to alleycat.org/PediatricSpayNeuter. Consult with your veterinarian about feeding requirements for kittens prior to trapping. Kittens may not need to have food withheld before surgery because their metabolism is faster than adult cats.

To learn how to safely feed cats while they are in their traps, go to alleycat.org/InTrapCare.

9. Pregnant or In-Heat Females

Will the veterinarian spay a pregnant female or a female in estrus (in heat) and are they experienced in the procedure? Is there an extra fee for this?

10. Other Protocols

Confirm that the clinic uses dissolvable sutures so no appointment is needed to remove them. Also confirm that the staff will remove all items they attach to the cats, such as tags, bandages, collars, or any other items the clinic may use to identify or treat them. Be sure that the trap tags, which include important information about where each cat should be returned, stay on the traps and that the same cats are returned to the traps they were removed from.

See our trap tag template at alleycat.org/TrapTag. Provide your veterinarian with a cat clinic tag for each cat. This will ensure that both you and the clinic fully understand the expectations for this visit. (Template available at alleycat.org/CatClinicTag.)

11. Recovery

Find out when the clinic discharges cats after surgery, and if there are different discharge times for males, females, pregnant females, etc. Ask if the clinic holds cats overnight for recovery. If so, is there an extra charge for this service?

See Surgery Recovery instructions for veterinarians at alleycat.org/Veterinarian.

For more on what veterinarians must know about when working with community cats, visit: alleycat.org/Veterinarian. For help finding financial resources visit alleycat.org/Economy.

Tip: It is not common for community cats to get the 'pre-op' blood test, which is performed for pet cats at some veterinary hospitals.

Set Up Your Holding/Recovery Area

Often cats are trapped early in the morning and go straight to the clinic for spaying and neutering, and sometimes they sleep over night at the clinic after surgery and are released back to their outdoor home right after being picked up from the clinic, but you need a safe, designated spot for them in the event it's needed before or after the trip to the clinic.

- Choose an indoor, dry, temperature-controlled (about 75°F), and

safe overnight holding/recovery area to potentially be use before and after the cats' surgeries.

- Some examples of acceptable locations are bathrooms, basements and garages. Your veterinarian or clinic may also have a recovery area, as discussed above.
- Make sure the recovery area is quiet and inaccessible to other animals.
- Ensure that all entries in and out (doors, windows, ceiling tiles, etc.) are closed at all times in the unlikely event that a cat escapes from her trap.

Assemble Your Trapping Kit

Your trapping kit should include:

- A FRIEND. Alley Cat Allies recommends trapping with at least one other person for your safety and peace of mind. A cell phone and flashlight are also suggested for these reasons.
- TRAPS. You should have one trap per cat, plus a few extra in case unexpected cats appear. For a list of traps Alley Cat Allies recommends, go to alleycat.org/Equipment.
- BAIT. You need to give cats a reason to enter traps. We like using several large pop-top cans of tuna, mackerel, sardines, or other smelly fish. The canned fish should be packed in oil so it does not dry out. If you don't bring pop-top cans, be sure to bring a can opener.
- WET WIPES or paper towels for easy cleanup.
- FORKS or spoons (to scoop out the bait).
- NEWSPAPER to line the bottom of the traps and tape or clothespins to hold it to the trap floor if necessary (like on windy

days). Magnetic vent covers also do the trick!

- TRAP LABELS with room for the date, cat description, exact location where the cat was trapped, and room for any observations, such as noticeable injuries.
- TRAP COVERS that are big enough (i.e. beach-size towels, blankets, or sheets—cut to size) to fully cover the top and all four sides of each trap. One cover per trap.
- CARABINERS, twist ties, or pipe cleaners to secure the closed doors of the traps.
- TRASH BAGS for tuna lids, used plastic ware, etc.
- THICK GLOVES to wear for your safety and comfort while carrying the cats in traps.
- ALLEY CAT ALLIES' COMMUNITY CAT COLONY TRACKING SYSTEM (alleycat.org/Tracking) and pen or pencil and clipboard.
- VEHICLE LINERS such as cardboard, large plastic trash bags, a plastic shower curtain, or towels. Puppy pads also work well if the cats have "accidents."
- BUNGEE CORDS to hold traps securely in place in your vehicle during transportation.
- PATIENCE. Trapping can be time-consuming and sometimes a bit stressful. If you remember to stay calm and follow the plan you created, you will be successful!

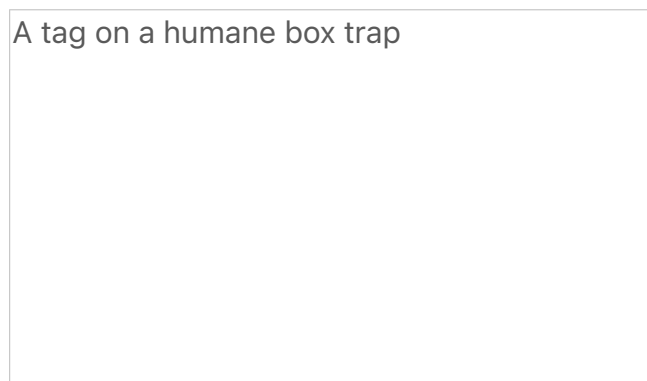
For more details on what to pack, visit alleycat.org/Equipment.

Prepare Equipment

Practice setting and baiting traps ahead of time. Test all your traps to ensure they are functioning properly.

Fill in the trap tag with your name, phone number, and information on

what you are doing. See our trap tag template at alleycat.org/TrapTag.



A trap tag or label provides key information.

Use a vehicle that comfortably fits all the traps inside its climate-controlled area. You can stack traps on top of one another, if need be, as long as you can

secure them with bungee cords, or something similar so they can't fall or tip over. Use a puppy pad or folded newspaper between the traps to protect the cats in the lower traps. NEVER put cats in the trunk or open bed of a vehicle.

Make Spay and Neuter Appointments With the Clinic

Pick the day you will trap and schedule your neuter appointments as close to the time of trapping as possible. Check the weather report and plan accordingly. Aim to trap the day before or the morning of the appointments.

The number of reservations should equal the number of cats you plan to trap. Make sure the clinic knows that you may end up bringing in more cats than expected. Inquire whether or not the clinic will hold the cats overnight while they recover from surgery.

Now you are ready to start trapping!

STEP 2: Trapping

Set Up and Prepare for Trapping

Do all your setup and preparation away from the colony site.

Remember: community cats are generally fearful of people.

Trapping will also go more smoothly if you don't disrupt the cats' feeding area. Throughout the entire trapping process, clinic stay,

A person puts bait in a humane box trap

A little bait goes a long way!

recovery, and return, you should make the environment around the cats as calm and quiet as possible. This will help minimize their stress.

Withhold food 24 hours before trapping, but always provide water. This will ensure that the cats are hungry enough to go into the traps. Remind other caregivers and neighbors to withhold food as well.

On the day of trapping, prepare all the traps:

1. Count all your traps and record how many you have. Draw a rough map of where you're placing traps to help keep track of them. Write down which cat came from which location, if your trapping area is large.
2. Line trap bottoms with a liner, such as newspaper or vent cover. If using newspaper, tape or clothespin the paper down if it's windy.
3. Run a test to make sure the trip plate is functioning properly before you bait the trap.
4. Place about one tablespoon of bait at the very back of the trap so the cat must step on the trip plate to reach the food. You may choose to put the food on a safe, disposable container (such as a plastic lid or paper plate). Drizzle some juice from the bait in a zigzag pattern along the trap floor toward the entrance. Also place a tiny bit of food ($\frac{1}{4}$

teaspoon) just inside the entrance of the trap to encourage the cat to walk in.

Do not use too much food at the entrance of the trap. The cat must be hungry enough to continue to the trip plate, and they need to have a near empty stomach for at least 12 hours before surgery.

5. Place the traps on level ground at the colony site. The cats will not enter an unstable or wobbly trap. Make sure the traps are not placed on a hill where they could tip or roll over when the cats enter them. Metal traps should never be placed on particularly hot or cold pavement, or they could become painful to cats' paws.

6. Fill in the exact location where you are setting the trap on your trap label. This will make return much easier!

7. Cover the traps and leave only about 1/4 of the front of the trap exposed. If you find the cats aren't going into the traps, try removing the covers. Every cat is different, so you may need to use a combination of covered and uncovered traps.

8. Set the trap and move away from the area and out of sight of the cats.

9. Be patient. At each trap, wait for a cat to enter and for the trap to close.

Tip: Keep an eye on the traps at all times for the safety of the cats, and to make sure your equipment is not taken or tampered with. Observe from a location far enough away that the cats will not be disturbed, but close enough to see all the traps. NEVER leave a set trap unattended.

Once Cats Are Trapped, Calmly Approach the Traps

1. Do not open the traps or touch the cats, even if it appears the cats are hurting themselves. Cats may thrash around after being trapped. Do not be alarmed by this—they are just scared and it is completely normal. Covering the trap will calm them down almost immediately. Remember: the only time cats should be removed from traps is during surgery and when you return them to their outdoor homes.

2. When trapping an entire colony, use your best judgment about removing each cat as they are trapped. Going to get one trap could scare away the other cats and disrupt the rest of the trapping. Wait to remove the trapped cats until other cats are not around. When setting out your traps, partially cover the back end of them to give trapped cats a bit of security until you can cover them fully.

3. Keep in mind, these are only guidelines. Some situations may call for you to deviate from them, so trust your instincts. For example, if a cat is severely thrashing around, you may need to immediately cover the trap and remove it from the area. If you are trapping in very cold or hot weather, cats should be covered and moved to a temperature-controlled location (like your car) as soon as they are trapped.

IMPORTANT: It is possible for a cat to die from hypothermia or heat stroke when confined in a trap outside. A simple guideline—if it is too hot or cold outside for you, then it is too hot or cold for the cats to be sitting in a trap. Move trapped cats to a temperature-controlled holding area as soon as possible.

4. Count your traps again before leaving the trapping area to ensure you don't leave any behind.

Tip: Cats can become trap-shy (frightened to go near or enter a trap) or trap-savvy (able to eat the bait without triggering the trap). If this happens, don't get discouraged. There are several techniques to humanely trap hard-to-trap-cats, including the use of a drop-trap. Please visit alleycat.org/HardtoTrap to learn more.

Transport the Cats From the Trapping Site

Safely transport the cats to the veterinarian's office, clinic, or a holding area you have already prepared. Please refer to the preparation section.

A man places a humane box trap in a van

A rectangular box trap is shown inside a van. The trap is light-colored and has a dark entrance on one side. The van's interior is visible, showing the floor and some equipment.

Step 3: Post-Surgery

1. Each cat should be returned to you in the same labelled trap in which she was brought to the clinic, with clean newspaper inside. You should receive medical records, including rabies vaccine certificates and microchip ID. Be sure to save these for your files!

Transport cats to the veterinary clinic.

2. Let the cats recover overnight in their traps, either at the clinic or in the recovery area you have set up for them. Make sure the traps remain in the climate-controlled and quiet recovery area that you already prepared.

When a cat is recovering from anesthesia, she is unable to regulate her body temperature. This is why it's so important for the recovery area to be warm but not hot—about 75°F.

3. While the cats are recovering, keep their traps covered. This reduces the stress on the cats and ensures both you and they are safe.

4. Monitor the cats. Check in regularly, about every hour or two. Keep an eye out for bleeding, infection, illness, or lack of appetite. If a cat is bleeding, vomiting, breathing irregularly, or not waking up, contact your veterinarian immediately!

5. Feed kittens under 6 months old shortly after they wake from anesthesia. Adult cats can be fed a few hours after they wake, but you may wait to feed them until after you return them to their colony site. To learn how to safely feed cats while they are in their traps, go to alleycat.org/PostSurgery.

6. Cats can be returned to their outdoor homes 24 hours after surgery if they're clear-eyed and alert. The clinic may ask you to make exceptions for cats who are slow to recover or need continuing post-operative care.

Since anesthesia drugs can impair cats' ability to regulate their body temperature, make sure cats are well recovered if it is exceptionally hot or cold outdoors (learn more at alleycat.org/WinterTips). The general rule of thumb is that the sooner your cats are returned to their outdoor home, the better. Confinement is extremely stressful for community cats.

7. Return the cats to the same location where you trapped them. Early morning is a good time, as it is quieter. Point the traps away from roads or high-traffic areas so the cats don't run into them. Open the front door of the trap and then completely remove the cover. If the trap has a back door, move the cover away and pull the door up and off (if

possible with your trap), then completely remove the cover and walk away.

Be careful to keep your distance and keep your fingers and hands as far from the cat as possible when opening the trap. Sometimes it takes the cats a moment to realize where they are, but they will run off once they get their bearings. Watch videos of cats being returned and how to carry out TNR at youtube.com/AlleyCatAllies.

8. Once you have returned the cats, provide food and water. If you are the cats' caregiver, you can resume the cats' regular feeding schedule. The cats may stay away from the area for a few days after being returned, but they will come back eventually.

9. Clean traps with non-toxic disinfectant, throw out all newspaper, and wash trap covers.

For more detailed post-surgery instructions, visit alleycat.org/PostSurgery.

GREAT JOB! You made it through a successful trapping.

You did it! You have joined the hundreds of thousands of compassionate individuals and groups across the globe who are working to protect and improve the lives of community cats. Thanks to you, the cats you helped will live happier, healthier lives. Your compassion and commitment has helped your whole community. It's people like you that make a huge difference—be proud!

Tidying Loose Ends and Smart Follow-Up:

- Trap any remaining cats who eluded your first round of trapping,

and any newcomers who have joined the colony.

- Maintain good relations with neighbors and address any concerns as they come up. To learn more about troubleshooting with neighbors, refer to How to Live with Cats in Your Neighborhood guide at alleycat.org/Deterrents.
- Find even more guidelines and tips for Trap-Neuter-Return and community cat colony care at alleycat.org/Community-Cat-Care.
- Attend one of our Helping Cats in Your Community webinars. It's a great way to learn how to do TNR, and attending a live session allows you to ask any questions you have for our expert staff. Register at alleycat.org/Webinar.

Hooked on Helping Cats? More You Can Do:

- If you will be trapping on a larger scale or continuing to trap in surrounding areas, you should implement "targeted trapping." Targeted trapping involves building out geographically from your first trapping spot to create an increasingly large "kitten-free zone." By targeting entire colonies in a single geographic location and then moving on to the surrounding colonies you will establish a strong foundation for stabilizing local populations of community cats. To learn more about targeted trapping visit alleycat.org/TargetedTrapping.
- Check out our other resources including our YouTube channel at youtube.com/AlleyCatAllies and fabulous cat-positive items in our shop at alleycat.org/Shop.
- Get personalized help through our online assistance form at alleycat.org/GetHelp.
- Join the Alley Cat Allies Feral Friends Network and help others learn TNR. You are now an experienced trapper ready to lend

support and share advice. Visit alleycat.org/FeralFriends for to learn more and to submit an online application.

- Protect cats in your community and around the world by becoming an advocate. Stay up to date on the latest updates, information, news, opportunities, events, and calls to action by joining the movement to protect and improve cats' lives at alleycat.org/SignUp.