



## **TNR Training Guide**

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This is a step-by-step guide written by Jacklean Kibler of Healing Paws Cat Sanctuary. Ms. Kibler has taken her 30+ years in the veterinary field along with her many years of trapping expertise to help you learn how to set up and care for feral cats/colonies in your area known as TNR colonies. This guide will explain what a feral cat is. How to trap them and how to care for them. By simply fixing just one cat, we can save 100's.

Chapter 1: All about feral cats

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## **Chapter 1: All about Feral Cats**

Below are some of the biggest misconceptions and facts surrounding feral cats and their colonies. If done right feral cat colonies can thrive in all areas, but we ALL must be willing to learn and help them too.

**1: *Being Misinformed*** Misinformation costs millions of cats their lives every year. As two organizations dedicated to the protection and humane treatment of cats, Healing Paws Cat Sanctuary is working to set the record straight. By educating people on the truth about feral cats (also known as community cats) and combating the false claims, we can stop the killing. These facts call for a world where every cat is valued and protected. A world in which every cat, regardless of whether it lives with people or not, is safe to live its life without threat from humans.

**2: *Cats have ALWAYS been outdoor animals*** For thousands of years, cats have lived outdoors alongside humans. Just because they do not live in our homes does not mean they are 'homeless.' Yet the current animal control system and even misguided animal welfare organizations believe that taking feral cats to shelters, where 100 percent of them will be killed, is more humane than leaving cats to live outdoors. Millions of cats share our homes, but not all cats are suited to living inside. For many feral cats, indoor homes are not an option because they have not been socialized to live with humans. They would be scared and unhappy indoors. Their home is the outdoors - just like squirrels, chipmunks, and birds. They are well suited to their outdoor home. The truth is that it is natural for cats to live outside.

**3: *The real threat to cats is NOT themselves*** People like to claim that cats are such an enormous threat to wildlife that they should be rounded up and killed. Shooting, poisoning, and mass extermination are among the extreme methods they suggest as solutions. Several prominent ecologists point to the fact that cats play a key role in many ecosystems, often stepping in to fill the place of now extinct or diminished small predators. Some point to the helpful roles they play in complex urban ecosystems, in which dumpster rats and mice far outnumber meadows. As for the main threats to wildlife, leading biologists and environmental watchdogs agree human-led activities - including climate change, habitat destruction, and development - are by far the number one cause of wildlife depletion.

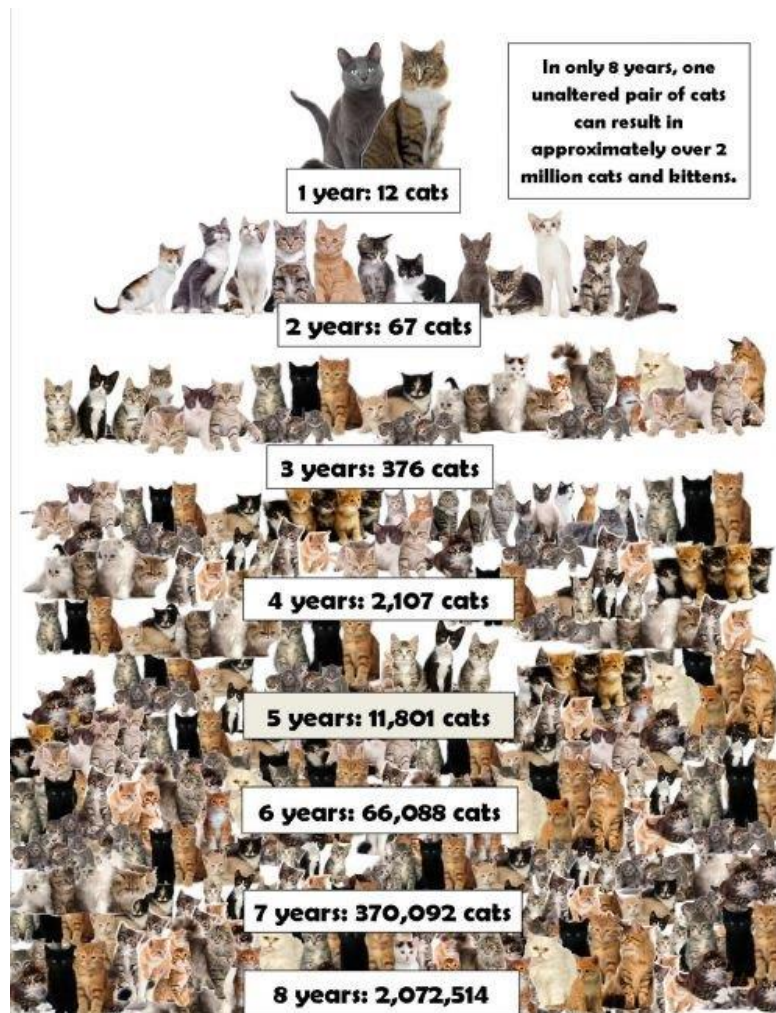
**4: *Feral communities can live long healthy lives*** Some people argue that feral cats suffer terribly, living short and brutal lives outside. They even go as far as to say that cats are better off dead than allowed to live naturally in their outdoor homes. The truth is that cats can live full and healthy lives outdoors. Many cats live indoors with humans. Other cats live their whole lives outdoors, many with little or no direct contact with humans. Just because some cats live inside, does not mean that we should hunt down and kill those who live outdoors. Cats cared for through TNR have healthy life spans. In 2013, a long-term study of a TNR program noted that 83% of the cats present at the end of the observation period had been there for more than six years. The lean physique of some feral cats sometimes leads animal control and other groups to claim that the cats are starving or ill, but a 2012 study found that feral cats have healthy body weights and fat distribution. If they may be a little leaner than the cat on your couch, it is the result of a different lifestyle, not because they are suffering or sick. Neutering feral cats is an act of compassion and helps improve their wellbeing.

**5: *Feral cats are NOT a health threat*** Feral cats have equally low rates of disease as the cats who share your home. Feral cats do not pose a rabies risk to humans: The last confirmed cat-to-human transmission of rabies occurred in 1975. The risk of catching rabies from a feral cat is almost non-existent. Statistics from the CDC show that as a source of rabies infections, cats rank way behind wild animals like bats, skunks, and foxes who account for more than 90 percent of reported cases of the disease. Since feral cats involved in TNR programs are vaccinated and therefore cannot acquire or transmit the virus, they pose no threats to humans or other animals. Most importantly, research confirms that feral cats are neither breeding grounds for disease nor a health threat to communities in which they live.

**6: *Shelters and feral cat's*** Current animal control and shelter policies result in millions of healthy cats being killed each year. Unfortunately, more than 70% of all cats brought to shelters, and 100% of feral cats are killed. The pounds and shelters say these animals are "euthanized." But an animal is only euthanized when they are terminally ill or untreatably injured. Using the word "euthanasia" masks what really happens to healthy cats in pounds and shelters, they are killed. Amidst all the false claims, the sad truth is this: the number one documented cause of death for cats in the U.S. is being killed in a shelter. Feral cats live healthy, natural lives outdoors, just as cats have done for thousands of years. Removing them from their outdoor home and into shelters is a death sentence and there is nothing humane about it.

## Chapter 2: What Is TNR (Trap-Neuter-Return)

This chapter will explain exactly what TNR is, how it works and how it can help lower the feral cat population in your area.



### **1: What is TNR**

**Trap:** Humanely (painlessly) trap all the cats in a colony (a group of cats living outdoors together).

**Neuter:** Take the cats in their traps to a clinic to be health checked, neutered, vaccinated, defleaed, and ear tipped. (A universal symbol indicating they have been neutered)

**Return:** Release the cats back to their original outdoor home where trapped.

**2: How TNR works** TNR, the humane approach to addressing community cat populations, works. It saves cats' lives and is effective. TNR improves the lives of cats, addresses community concerns, reduces complaints about cats, and stops the breeding cycle. TNR improves the co-existence between outdoor cats and humans in our shared environment. This is why so many cities are adopting it. Scientific studies and communities with TNR programs are proof that TNR reduces and stabilizes populations of community cats.

**3: How TNR lowers the feral cat population** Before TNR for more than a century, the American shelter and animal control system has been relying on catching and killing outdoor cats to control their population. This approach continues to fail, and the number of outdoor cats increases even though millions of vibrant, healthy outdoor cats are killed each year. Taxpayer money that funds shelters and animal control agencies is wasted on an endless cycle of trapping and killing. Increasingly, the public believes that the money spent on killing could and should be re-allocated to programs that help animals. With catch and kill policies, vaccinated and neutered cats are removed from an area. But that only creates a vacuum in the environment, where new cats move in to take advantage of available resources. The new cats breed and the cat population grows. Catch and kill policies are not just cruel and ineffective, they go against what the public really wants: humane approaches

to cats. After TNR it balances the needs and concerns of the human communities in which many feral cats live. People do not want cats rounded up and killed. They want to see cat populations stabilized and appreciate when the mating behaviors of cats are brought into check through spaying and neutering. With TNR, adult cats are returned to the colony to live out their lives in their outdoor home. TNR is about more than saving today's cats: it is the future of animal control and sheltering. Every year, more communities are adopting TNR programs to save more cats and improve their communities. Please join Healing Paws Cat Sanctuary and help us spread the word. You can bring TNR to *your* community too!

## **Chapter 3: Registering a feral cat colony**

This chapter will explain why you need to register your feral cat colony and how you go about doing it.

**1: *Why do I need to register as a feral colony caregiver*** It is ESPECIALLY important that you register your feral cat colony with the city/county in which it is located. By doing this you are letting local animal control and other people know that these animals are being cared for. Also, by registering your colony neutering/vacs/ear tipping (this is done so people can see the cat is part of a registered colony) are also offered at n/c for each cat that is done.

**2: *How can I register my feral cat colony*** Below is a list of the cities and how/who to contact at each one to register your feral cat colony.

\*\*\* ALL FERAL CAT COLONIES MUST BE REGISTERED TO PARTICIPATE IN THEIR TNR PROGRAMS \*\*\*

**Daytona Beach/ Port Orange/Holly Hill/Edgewater/New Smyrna Beach:** Contact CCFaw (concerned citizens for animal welfare). Please leave your name, address, phone number and the approximate number of cats in your colony in your email or phone message as messages without this information will not be returned. Email Pat at ccfaaw@ccfaaw.org or Call Marea at 386-760-6330

**Debary/Orange City:** Call Heather Crowne at 407-810-6071

**Deland:** Call Rebecca Ackerman at 386-626-7413 or email ackermanr@deland.org

**Deltona:** Call Heidi Herzberg at 386-405-8335

**Flagler County:** Flagler Cats TNR ask@flaglercats.org 386-503-4250

**Flagler Humane Society:** 386-445-1814

**Oak Hill:** Farmhouse Cats email at pseuberling@cfl.rr.com or on Facebook under Farmhouse Cats

**Orange City/Debary:** Heather Crowne at 407-810-6071

**Ormond Beach:** Ormond Beach Animal Control Officer Joann Owen at 386-676-3262

**Palm Coast:** Community Cats Elizabeth Robinson 386-237-7690 Email: elizabeth@communitycatspc.org

**Ponce Inlet:** Nancy Epps at 386-795-2310

**South Daytona:** Officer Steve Pignataro at 386-322-3059

**Unincorporated Volusia County:** Volusia County Animal Services 386-248-1790 and choose option four for a direct line to VCAS

## Chapter 4: Setting up your feral cat colony

This chapter will explain how to keep track of all your feral cats and how to set up proper feeding stations and shelter areas for your feral cats.

### **1: Know your feral kittens/cats**

It is important that you get to know your colony, the number of cats and their descriptions to ensure that all the cats have been trapped. This is also important for ongoing colony care, so you will know if any cats are missing, sick, injured or if any new cats join the colony that need to be neutered. Attached is a feral cat colony care sheet. Use this to keep track of the # and conditions of ALL your feral kittens/cats.

### **2: Setting up a safe shelter area**

It is important to offer a safe and warm/dry place for EACH feral cat to sleep. Make sure they are in a safe area away from traffic. You can do this several separate ways and below we list a couple of easy and cost-efficient ways to do this.

#### **Styrofoam container cat shelter:**

All you need is a Styrofoam cooler, a box cutter, some straw, vinyl tiles or contact paper and a few boards to create this simple, effective feral cat shelter. Place the vinyl tiles on the bottom inside of the cooler, this stops the bottom from getting torn up. Next measure and cut a hole in one side of the cooler. This needs to be large enough to fit the largest cat in your colony but small enough to not let predators in if possible. Now add straw on the inside (NEVER paper/towels/blankets/etc as these will draw moisture and not retain heat) Next secure the top on and finally attach it at a slight slant (so water/snow etc can drain off it) to a couple 2x4s to keep it off the ground. You can also paint them to make them blend into the surroundings.



#### **Plastic tote cat shelter:**

You will need a 30gal (or biggest you can find) plastic tote container, straw, box cutters and a few boards to create this simple, effective feral cat shelter. Measure and cut a hole in one side big enough to fit a cat through. Now add straw on the inside (NEVER paper/towels/blankets/etc as these will draw moisture and not retain heat) Next secure the top on and finally attach it at a slight slant (so water/snow etc can drain off it) to a couple 2x4s to keep it off the ground. You can also paint them to make them blend into the surroundings.

### **3: Setting up a safe feeding area**

**Proper Placement of Stations** Feeding stations should be discreet, low-profile and they should blend in with the immediate surroundings as much as possible. Try to keep them out of sight of the public. Two reasons for this... first, cats will not want to go to a high trafficked area to eat as they will not feel safe, and secondly, this way it draws as little attention as possible to where the cats are getting fed, which affords them greater protection. If someone wants to harm the cats, it is a lot harder for them to do that if they do not know where you are feeding.

**Constructing Your Feeding Station** There is nothing worse than having a big bowl of dry cat food that has been rained on – it turns to soggy mush and after about a day it can even get moldy. Cats will not want to eat it and YOU will get stuck cleaning it! Feeding stations need to be waterproof. Ideally, the feeding station you construct should be able to fit your bowls of food and at least one cat, so at a minimum one cat can eat at a time and that poor cat does not have to eat out in the rain in inclement weather. Water bowls do not necessarily have to be inside the feeding station, although it is nice. If you cannot do a station that sizable because of the need for discretion, the bigger priority is to make sure the food stays dry and protected. A slick and easy way to keep feeding stations dry is to take a large rectangular Rubbermaid storage bin, tip it on its side and put the food in it. The bin serves double duty both as camouflage and it protects the food from the elements. If you get blustery rain where you live, you can take the lid to the storage bin and cut it lengthwise and then put it back on the bin, so that the top half acts as an awning of sorts. Zip tie the lid in place. If you need to, you can even place the entire bin on a couple of wood boards or cement blocks so that it is up off the ground and out of any puddles. Depending on how many cats you are feeding, an empty cat carrier with the door taken off can also be a waterproof feeding station. Your average medium size cat carrier can fit at least one if not two big bowls for food. Similarly, any sort of large plastic bin or wooden box with one side cut open will do. The most crucial factor is that it is waterproof.



**Choosing the Right Feeding Dishes** You will want to choose an overall bowl style that will work best for your own situation. As a rule, though, it is important to select bowl colors that will blend in with the area where you are feeding. If you are feeding in an open, natural setting, choose earthy colors such as tans, greens, browns, and blacks. A bright red bowl in a park or nature setting will stick out like a sore thumb and draw unnecessary attention. Go with muted and dark colors. Also, ants can plague feral feeding stations. Most people find that “moat” bowls work well. This is where you have a large outer bowl filled with an inch or two of water and you put a smaller bowl inside it holding the food. A 9×13” baking pan can work well as an outer bowl; fill it with an inch of water and then place in it almost any size inner bowl. Moat bowls can be easily homemade and are very inexpensive.

**Monitor the feedings** After you feed, do not race off! Plan to spend about 15 minutes observing what happens. Either sit in your car or watch from a short distance away. See who shows up, whether they are ear tipped and what kind of shape they are in. If you are not already keeping a log of all the cats in your colony, you should try to jot down names, breeds, colors, and descriptions, who you get fixed and when. Monitor how much food the cats are eating daily. That alone will give you an initial indication of how many cats you may be feeding, and you will know what is “normal” for that colony. If they are going through their food faster than normal, you may have a pregnant mom or some newcomers who have showed up. If they are eating less, you should try to do a headcount on the cats to see if they are all okay. With the cats that do show up to eat, watch for health issues that could need medical attention. Watch for signs of mange. Look for URI signs like runny eyes or snotty noses and listen for sneezes. If a cat is losing weight or if their coat seems matted or unkempt, like they are not grooming themselves well, it is likely an indication of illness and you should trap that cat and take him/her to a vet immediately.

## Chapter 5: Trapping your feral cat's

This chapter will explain the correct way to trap/release your feral to not cause harm to them or yourself.

**ALWAYS** put your safety first. Keep the traps covered to reduce the cats' stress. Never open the trap doors or allow the cats out of the traps until they are ready to release them. Do not stick your fingers through the bars or attempt to handle the cats.

### **1. Set-up and prepare for trapping**

Do all your set up and preparation away from the colony site - remember, feral cats are generally fearful of people. Trapping will also go more smoothly if you do not disrupt the cats' feeding area. Throughout the entire trapping process, clinic stay, recovery and return, you should make the environment around the cats as calm and quiet as possible. This will help minimize their stress. Twenty-four hours before trapping, *withhold food*, but always continue to 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 (and remind them you are coming to trap!). *And really stress the importance of this!*

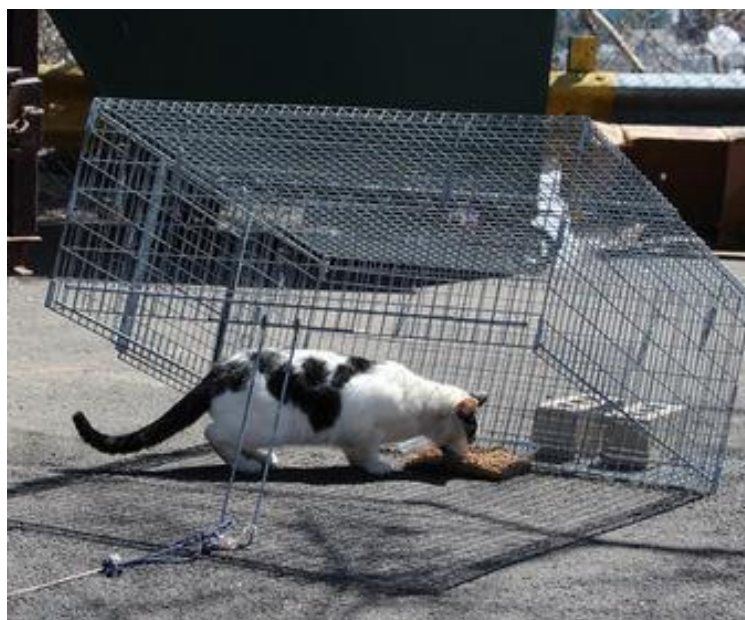
### **2. Prepare the traps**

Line the bottom of the trap and tag the trap. Place newspaper, folded lengthwise to fit the width of the trap, inside the bottom of the trap to protect the cats' paws. If it is windy, secure the newspaper to the trap with tape or pegs (this is done so the wind will not move the newspaper and frighten the cats) and while ensuring nothing interferes with the trapping mechanism or trap door. Should you open the rear door, be sure to relock it before trapping. If your trap does not have a rear door, you can secure the front door open with a twist tie while you work, and then remove it for trapping. Do not forget to remove it or your trap will be useless! You may need to have several different areas to set traps when trapping an entire colony; in this case, tag the traps with a description of the location so that you can return the cats exactly where you trapped them.

### **3. Types of traps available**

**Catch and release trap (assorted sizes available / [pic on left](#))** These traps feature one spring-loaded door for easy bait, set, and release and one door that opens for safe removal of the cat.

**Drop trap (assorted sizes available / [pic on right](#))** A drop trap is a cage made to get hard to catch feral cats. It is propped up on one side with a poll, and food is placed in the back. The trapper stands at a distance, holding a string attached to the poll. When the cats are eating, the trapper pulls the string, allowing the trap to drop, capturing the cats inside.



#### **4. Bait the traps**

First, ensure the trip plate and trap door are functioning properly. Place approximately one tablespoon of bait (tuna, mackerel, sardines) at the very back of the trap, so that the cat will step on the trigger plate while attempting to reach the food. You may choose to put the food in a lid or container for this, but make sure that it does not have sharp edges that could harm the cat once trapped and be sure it will not interfere with the trapping mechanism. Drizzle some juice from the bait in a zigzag pattern along the trap floor toward the entrance. You should also place a tiny bit of food ( $\frac{1}{2}$  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 for two reasons: The cat must be hungry enough to continue to the trip plate. Cats should have an empty stomach for at least 12 hours before surgery. Alternatively, you can bait the newspaper in the same way before positioning it in the trap - make sure you place the newspaper the right way round in the trap, so that the bulk of the food is over the trip plate.

#### **5. Set the traps**

Place a trap on the ground and make certain it is stable and will not rock or tip - cats will not enter an unstable trap. Do not place the trap on a hillside or incline. Ensure that metal traps do not sit on particularly hot or cold pavement (those temperatures could make the metal painful to the cats' paw pads when they touch it). If you are using multiple traps, stagger them and have those facing different directions. Try to place the traps where they will attract a cat and be camouflaged, e.g., near a bush. If you noted cat access laneways in your preparation, place traps in those locations. Move quietly and slowly so your movements will not frighten cats away. On your already prepared trap labels, fill in the exact location where you are setting the trap. This will make return much easier!

#### **6. Keep track of the traps at all times**

Traps should NEVER be left unattended. Check the traps frequently from a distance. Choose a location to park your car and wait where you are far enough away to give the cats a sense of safety, but close enough so that you can see them. If you use a trap site that is out of your field of vision (a shed or barn), wait somewhere close enough to hear when the trap is tripped. And, if this is not possible or, like me, you are hard of hearing, use baby monitors or walkie talkies to ensure you know exactly when the trap is sprung. There are several reasons to make sure you always have an eye on the traps: Leaving a cat uncovered in a trap for too long will increase the cat's stress and could lead to injury since they thrash against the cage. You may want to place a sheet over just the back part of the trap - not the front - before you place the trap so you can easily cover the entire thing after the cat is caught. This could also encourage the cat to go inside the trap since it is a covered, safe place. When in a trap, the cat is exposed - and could be injured by other animals or a malicious person. Traps may be stolen, damaged or sprung, or someone who does not understand your intentions may release a trapped cat. To be safe, take an exact count of your traps at the beginning and end of your trapping day. In larger colonies there may be multiple trapping locations. It is important not to leave any traps unsupervised, so consider bringing multiple trappers to help. If you are trapping alone do not put out more traps than you track visually and/or audibly.

#### **7. Trapping hard to trap feral's**

Get the cats used to eating out of the trap. A short break can reduce a cat's fear of the trap. During this time, keep feeding that cat and others in unset traps for about a week or more before trapping again. Feed the cats in the same place and time as always. Load the trap the opposite way you normally would, so that the food is in the front of the trap and the front door is closed, because you do not want the trap set. Take off the back door or tie it securely open. Place the food by the entrance of the trap, then inside, then over a period of days gradually move it closer to the back. Feed in the same place and time as always. Monitor the traps while the cats eat to ensure traps are not stolen or a cat is not accidentally trapped. The cat will see other cats eating inside the traps and will try it as well. When you are ready to trap again, withhold food for 24 hours.

Try using a larger size trap. Some cats may be more comfortable entering a larger trap, which has a taller opening and wider sides.

Make the trap more enticing. Consider using the following smelly treats as bait: Bits of jarred baby food (not containing onions) – Catnip - The herb valerian. Make a strong-smelling broth by boiling Valerian Root in water, and then douse the trap with it. Other types of bait, depending on what you originally used, such as tuna in oil, mackerel, canned cat food, sardines, anchovies, or cooked chicken. For intact toms, the scent of females in heat is extremely enticing! When you trap such a female, do not clean the trap afterwards, instead keep its scent intact for trapping unaltered toms.

Place the trap in a more secluded location/camouflage the trap. Moving the trap to a quieter or more protected location can raise the cat's comfort level enough to enter. Or you can try to blend the trap in with its surroundings. First, hide the trap under a bush, under a leaning piece of wood or in a box so the cat feels like he is entering a dark hole. To further disguise the trap, cover it with branches, leaves, camouflage material, burlap, or other natural materials. Even simply covering the trap with dark cloth or a towel can do the trick. Be sure that the coverings you use do not interfere with the trap door closing.

Take a break from trapping. If a cat will not go into a trap after repeated attempts, take a break for a week (except in the case of an injured cat). The trap-shy cat needs to be reconditioned to not be afraid to go in the trap. It is important to stop trapping until you have trapped the trap-shy cat. Continuing will result in the cat becoming increasingly reluctant.

## ***8. Trapping a momma/babies***

These instructions are for moms with kittens that are old enough to walk. We understand your reservations about interfering with nursing mothers and their kittens, but the best thing you can do for the whole family in every situation is to TNR them as soon as it is safe to do so. Where you place the kittens after trapping—either in adoptive homes or back with their colony depends on many factors, including your own time and resources. No two situations are exactly alike, so be prepared to use your judgment. The best place for kittens younger than eight weeks old is with their mother, if possible. The ideal window for socializing kittens is between five weeks and nine weeks. Older kittens can be tnr'd. If the mother is feral and the kittens are too young to be separated from her, the best thing for the family is to leave them where they are for now. Remember, the mother is best able to care for her kittens. Provide food, water, and shelter. Monitor the family daily and make the environment as safe for them as you can. If you have decided you do not have the time or the resources to foster, socialize, and adopt kittens, then you can tnr the whole family when the kittens are 12 weeks old or three pounds. If you can foster, socialize, and adopt kittens, the ideal window is when the kitten is between five weeks and nine weeks old. The best thing for the mother cat is to be trapped, spayed, and returned to her outdoor home. If you trap a cat and discover at the clinic that she is a nursing mother, get her spayed immediately and return her to the area where you trapped her as soon as she is clear-eyed that evening. (You may also choose to go looking for the kittens.) Nursing mother cats continue to produce milk after being spayed and can continue to nurse their kittens. It may seem counterintuitive to separate her from her kittens, but it is difficult to trap her again and this may be your only real chance to spay her and prevent further litters. Many times, you only learn she is a nursing mother after she is at the clinic. Make sure the clinic knows your plans for returning nursing mothers as soon as possible as they may have an anesthesia protocol that will enable her to wake up from surgery more quickly. Try to find the kittens before releasing the mom or follow the mother after you return her so that you can trap the kittens and neuter them when they are old enough. On your first attempt at trapping a cat family, always set out at least one baited trap for every cat and kitten in the family. Several kittens will often run into a trap together. DO NOT try and separate them on your own. If you do not trap mom in the first round, she will soon hear, see, and smell her kittens in the trap and want to get close to them, providing the perfect incentive for her to enter a trap herself. Once you have a kitten trapped, immediately set up a second trap of comparable size end-to-end against the one holding the kitten, so that mom will have to walk into the open trap to reach her baby. Do not open the trap holding the kitten. The short ends of the traps should be touching, and the two traps together should form a long rectangle. To make sure mom goes inside the trap and not around the back or sides, cover the trap holding the kitten on three sides so that the kitten is only visible from the entrance of the open trap. Cover the area where the traps meet, so mom cannot see the partition as easily. To her, it will appear as though the kitten is inside a tunnel. If you trap the mother cat first, or if you are trapping other cats and you trap her by accident, keep her in the trap and set a second trap. Follow the same instructions outlined above with the traps used end-to-end, with one important addition: once you have trapped one kitten, you will have to set up a new trap for the next kitten. Kittens can also be used to trap their siblings in a similar fashion.

## ***9. Post surgery and releasing the feral cats***

### Picking up your feral

The cats should be returned to you in the same covered equipment in which they were brought to the clinic, with clean newspaper inside. Ask if any of the cats need special care, any that need an eye kept on them and/or any that need to be kept longer than usual before release. If you are given medical records, be sure to save them. Most clinics will require you to sign a consent and/or release form, either for each cat or for multiple cats, and you should do so. You may want to keep a copy for your own records. Most clinics will also supply you with written aftercare guidelines.

### Hold cats until they recover

Cats usually need to be held for 24 hours after surgery, depending on recovery speed. Male cats can be returned to the trapping site 24 hours following surgery, if they are fully awake and do not require further medical attention. Females can also be returned after 24 hours if they are not licking/chewing at the surgery site. You **MUST** return nursing mothers as soon as possible, once they completely regain consciousness, so they can get back to their kittens. Make sure all cats are fully conscious, clear-eyed, and alert before release. Any cats that need to be held for longer than 24 hours must be transferred to a bigger cage, they cannot be kept for that amount of time in a trap. Monitor the cats often for their progress; keep an eye out for bleeding, infection, illness, and lack of appetite. If a cat is vomiting, bleeding, having difficulty breathing or not waking up, get veterinary assistance immediately. Ask the clinic before the surgery how to reach them in an emergency if there are surgical complications. If a cat is vomiting while still unconscious, her head should be turned to avoid choking. Sometimes this can be achieved by gently tipping the trap to no more than a 30-degree angle to change the cat's position. Be careful when tipping the trap so that you do not harm the cat by jostling them too much. Very occasionally a cat will lick at their stitches. If there is a danger of them tearing the wound, they will need to wear an E Collar. You will not be able to release such a cat until the wound is completely healed and the lampshade collar removed. Do not attempt to remove a lampshade collar from a feral cat yourself.

### Releasing the cats

Release the cats in the same place you trapped them. Early morning is a suitable time. Place the holding cages on solid ground and point them away from roads or high-traffic areas. Pull the door of each cage or trap up and off, while standing away from the door and the cat's direction of exit. Then completely remove the cover and walk away. Do not be concerned if the cat hesitates a few moments before leaving. They are simply reorienting themselves to their surroundings. Sometimes a cat can 'disappear' for a few days after they return. They will appear eventually. Resume the colony feeding schedule and continue to provide food and water as they may turn up and eat when you are not around.

### Clean & disinfect the equipment

Thoroughly clean the traps and cages with a nontoxic disinfectant when the return is complete. Whether the traps are borrowed or your own, they should be cleaned and disinfected before they are stored. Then they will be ready for the next trapping adventure. Even traps that appear clean must be disinfected - the scent of the cat previously trapped may deter other cats from entering. The exception to this is a trap that has held a queen in heat - it can sometimes be worth keeping such traps with the scent intact to entice hard-to-trap toms.

## Chapter 6: Caring for your feral colony

This chapter will explain the most common illnesses in feral cats along with how to treat them. Please check with your local veterinarian to see if they treat feral's as unfortunately not all do.

**1. Feline Leukemia** is a disease that spreads through urine, nose discharge and saliva. Cats can catch the disease through bites, sharing food and water bowls, and from simply living together. Mother cats can pass the disease along to their kittens, and kittens are more likely to contract the disease than adult cats. Some cats will immediately become ill upon contracting the virus; however, in other cats, symptoms of the disease will not manifest for several weeks/months/years. Feline leukemia can result in several conditions, including system-wide infections, diarrhea, skin infections, eye disease, respiratory tract infections, bladder infections, infertility, anemia, and cancer. Any severe chronic illness can be a sign of feline leukemia.

**Treatment:** Although there is no cure for feline leukemia, the disease is easily preventable with the vaccine once tested for it and they are negative.

**2. FIV (feline immunodeficiency virus)** is a disease that primarily spreads through bite wounds, and outdoor cats and territorial tomcats are most susceptible to infection. However, unlike feline leukemia, casual contact through sharing food and water bowls does not significantly increase the risk of contracting FIV. Although a mother cat may pass the virus along to her kittens, this happens rarely. Once the virus enters the bloodstream, it can remain dormant until it progresses into an active disease. FIV is terminal, and because it targets the immune system, cats that have the disease run an increased risk of enlarged lymph nodes, ulcers of the tongue, inflamed gums, progressive weight loss, poor coat and skin disease, diarrhea, anemia, eye disease and cancer.

**Treatment:** Although there is no cure for FIV, the disease is easily preventable with the vaccine once tested for it and they are negative.

**3. Feline Panleukopenia**, also known as feline distemper, is a highly contagious viral disease in cats. Kittens are most at risk, and they almost always die -- even if given treatment after contracting the disease. It can spread through bodily fluids, feces, and fleas, and is usually transmitted by contaminated food and water bowls, litter trays and clothing. Feline distemper affects cats' intestinal tract and attacks their immune systems. Cats suffering from the disease are likely to experience diarrhea, vomiting, dehydration, malnutrition, and anemia. Symptoms include depression, loss of appetite, lethargy, and tail and back leg biting. A vet can diagnose feline panleukopenia through fecal and blood tests.

**Treatment:** Treatment of feline panleukopenia is aggressive since the disease can kill within a day of contraction. Cats usually receive blood transfusions, antibiotics, and vitamin injections to combat the disease. FVRCP vaccines starting at 8weeks of age can prevent this disease.

**4. FIP (Feline infectious peritonitis)** The virus is shed in feces and cats become infected by ingesting or inhaling the virus, usually by sharing cat litter trays, or using contaminated litter scoops or brushes transmitting infected microscopic cat litter particles to uninfected kittens and cats. Direct, cat-to-cat, virus transmission does not commonly occur. There are two main forms of FIP effusive (wet) and non-effusive (dry). While both types are fatal, the effusive form is more common (60–70% of all cases are wet) and progresses more rapidly than the non-effusive form. The hallmark clinical sign of effusive FIP is the accumulation of fluid within the abdomen or chest, which can cause breathing difficulties. Other symptoms include lack of appetite, fever, weight loss, jaundice, and diarrhea. Dry FIP will also present with lack of appetite, fever, jaundice, diarrhea, and weight loss, but there will not be an accumulation of fluid. Typically a cat with dry FIP will show ocular or neurological signs. For example, the cat may develop difficulty in standing up or walking, becoming functionally paralyzed over time. Loss of vision is another outcome of the disease.

**Treatment:** Although there is no cure for FIP there is one intra-nasal vaccine available however there are reports of cats dying from FIP weeks after receiving the vaccination, sending its effectiveness into question.

**5. Rabies** According to The Merck Veterinary Manual, cats are reported rabid more often than any other domesticated animal in the United States. And feline rabies is one of the most dangerous cat diseases, because it does not infect just cats -- it can be passed along to humans, too. Rather than cat-to-cat transmission, feline rabies usually spreads to cats through bites from wild animals. This debilitating and degenerative disease attacks the nervous system. Feline rabies can be deceptively slow moving; the disease can incubate in a cat's system for as many as two to five weeks, according to VetInfo.com. Symptoms include poor coordination, conjunctivitis, yowling, drooling, fever, strange behavior, depression, and weight loss.

**Treatment:** Although there is no cure for feline rabies. There is a vaccine given at 16weeks of age that can prevent this disease.

**6. Abscess** A puncture wound that closes over on the surface of the skin while infection spreads below the surface. If an abscess opens, you will notice blood, pus, and an unpleasant smell. Otherwise, you may see a lump under the fur anywhere on the body. An untreated abscess can spread infection throughout the body.  
**Treatment:** The abscess needs to be opened and drained, getting all the infection out. You then want to keep the area clean and scab free, so it does not close over and refill with puss. You also want to start the cat on clavamox antibiotics.

**7. Ear mites** There are several types of ear mites that can live in cats' ears, but the most common are otodectes cynotis, tiny, eight-legged parasites that feed on the wax and oils in a cat's ear canal. An individual mite has a three-week life cycle and is barely detectable by the naked eye. Causing irritation and inflammation, ear mites can infect the external and internal canal, and lead to more serious skin or ear infections if left untreated. Infection usually produces a characteristic dark discharge-and in the most severe cases, a cat's ear canal can become entirely obstructed by this coffee ground-like debris. Symptoms of ear mites in cats are excessive scratching and rubbing of ears, head shaking, hair loss and dermatitis, black or brown waxy secretion, strong odor, inflammation of the ear, obstruction of ear canal with coffee ground-like debris, scratches or scabs near ear.

**Treatment:** Topical Revolution will kill ear mites. Apply (2) doses at 3 weeks apart to kill both adults and hatching eggs.

**8. Ringworm** Is a fungus that can be found on the surface of the skin. It is also known as dermatophytosis. Both cats and dogs are prone to the disease, but cats are especially vulnerable. There are three types of fungus that may cause ringworms, but the most prevalent of all is the microsporum canis. In the Journal of Small Animal Practice, it mentions how 94% of all ringworms in cats are caused by this type of fungus. It is a fungus found on wild animals like small rodents. Your cat is most likely suffering from ringworm if you see your cat's skin with a small, round, hairless lesion on it. Its appearance may vary depending on where the disease occurs. Usually, ringworm occurs on the face, ears, tail, and claws, but it may spread across the other areas of the body and may form an irregular shape. It may start as a small spot, but it grows eventually when it is left untreated. When it reaches this stage, the condition can be diagnosed as severe, and may need long-term treatment.

**Treatment:** A topical cream containing an antifungal like miconazole or thiabendazole applied daily for at least 3 weeks to make sure all the fungi is killed off. It is important to decontaminate the environment through intensive cleaning of the carpets and furnishings where fungi might reside.

**9. Cat scabies** Is a skin condition which is caused by a small mite, only one-third of a millimeter in length, known as notoedres cati. This mite is **very contagious** between cats and is shared through direct contact. When treating you need to keep all infected cats quarantined from ALL other cats until treatment is complete. Interestingly, the notoedres cati mite can only live on a cat. It cannot use a dog or a human as its host. Cat scabies is known for causing extreme itching and patchy hair loss. As the female mite burrows underneath the skin of your cat to lay her eggs, she creates a very intensely irritating feeling for your cat. While it is the head and neck area that will be affected, the entire body of your cat is a playground for this mite. Eventually, your cats continuous scratching will create bald spots and patches of scabbiness. If left untreated, the scabs will start to crust, and a secondary infection can develop.

**Treatment:** Topical Revolution Apply (2) doses 2 weeks apart. If the infection is severe, you can apply a third dose 2 weeks after the second one.

**10. Upper respiratory infection (URI)** Is a viral infection like the flu in humans. Symptoms may include yellowish nose and/or eye discharge, congestion, and sneezing. URI can lead to secondary infections like pneumonia and in some cases can become life threatening if untreated.

**Treatment:** Amoxicillin is the favorable antibiotic given for this at a dose of 5-10mg. per lb every 12 hours for 14 days.

**11. Fleas** Are a very common external feline health problem. But it is one you can easily treat. Signs your cat has fleas include: flea dirt on its skin (they look like tiny black dots) constant scratching/frequent licking/red or irritated skin/hair loss/skin infections or hot spots. Fleas can live for more than a year, and your cat risks anemia if the problem becomes serious, so be sure to treat your cat's flea problem and prevent future infestations.

Flea infestation in kittens can also lead to life-threatening anemia.

**Treatment:** Topical Revolution applied monthly. You can also apply diatomaceous earth (Food Grade) to their coats and bedding/living areas, this will also kill fleas.

**12. Tape, Round, Hook, Whip, Lung and Heartworms** One of the most common feline health problems is inside your cat. Most of these common parasites are contracted by ingesting infected soil, water, bodily waste, or an infected host such as a bird or rodent. The parasites can also usually be caught by consuming an infected mother's milk or by eating infected fleas while self-grooming; some parasites can even burrow through skin to infect a pet. These parasites can cause bloody stools, diarrhea, itching around anus, lethargy, pale tongue, gums, and nose, swollen abdomen (pot-bellied appearance) visible worms in vomit or stool and weight loss and depending on the parasite even death. Cats almost always get tapeworms because of swallowing a flea so be sure to manage any flea problems your cat has before tackling tapeworms.

**Treatment** Praziquantel for tapeworms. Emodepside for hookworms and roundworms. Pyrantel for hookworms and roundworms. Fenbendazole for whipworms and giardia. Treat every two weeks for two months to kill all the parasites as the eggs hatch.

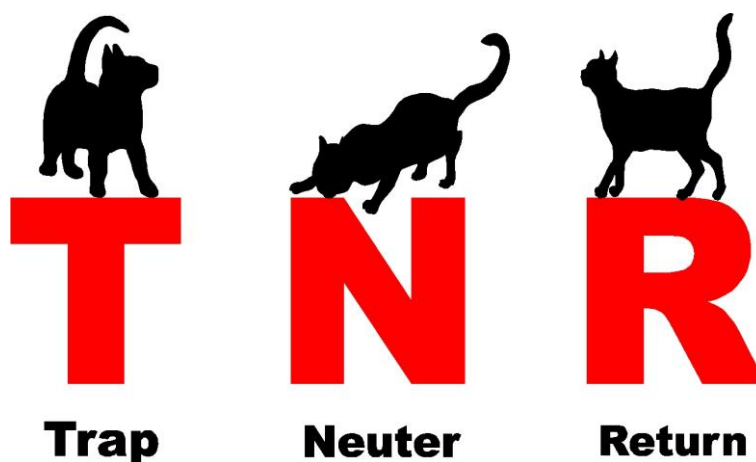
**13. Conjunctivitis** Is a cat disease characterized by an inflammation of the eyelid membrane. Pink, crusty, or swollen eyes are a giveaway from conjunctivitis. This cat disease is most seen in kittens because their immune systems are weaker. This is contagious so if one feral has it check, because others will also more than likely have it to.

**Treatment:** Terramycin Ointment applied every 12 hours for 10 days

**14. Kidney Failure in Cats** Unfortunately, kidney failure is one of the most prominent cat health issues. Kidney failure can be either acute or chronic. Symptoms include vomiting, weight loss, lethargy, behavior change, increased urination, and back pain. Unfortunately, there is no way to prevent kidney failure. Once diagnosed you continue to treat the symptoms for their remaining life span.

**Treatment:** may include prescription medications, prescription foods and fluid therapy.

In closing we hope this guide helps you to set up and care for the feral cats in your area. If we all take the time to do our part, we can help to lower the feral cat population.



## **Feral Cat Colony Tracking Information Sheet's**

These forms will enable you to identify and track the individual feral cats in your colony and chart the progress of your TNR effort.

### **Caregiver Information:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Caregiver Information:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Colony Information:**

Name of colony: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of location: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Colony Information:**

Name of colony: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of location: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Trapper Information: (if different from caregiver)**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Veterinarian or clinic performing medical care:**

Name of Veterinarian: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Clinic: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

**Setting:** ☐ Alley ☐ Offices ☐ Apartment ☐ Residential ☐ Rear of address ☐ Park ☐ Industrial  
☐ other, describe: \_\_\_\_\_

**Date current TNR plan was implemented:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Total number of cats in colony before TNR is completed:**

Adult male: \_\_\_\_\_

Adult female: \_\_\_\_\_

Kittens: \_\_\_\_\_

**Total number of cats in colony after TNR is completed:**

Adult male: \_\_\_\_\_

Adult female: \_\_\_\_\_

Kittens: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of cats euthanized: \_\_\_\_\_

