

Spay Pasco

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Caretaker Instructions for Trapping

Thank you for joining Spay Pasco in its continuing effort to reduce the number of homeless cats. Your participation in this effort is critical to its success. At the clinic, your cats will be anesthetized and surgically sterilized. The tip of the left ear will be tipped to identify it as a sterile, feral cat. All cats will be vaccinated against rabies. Later the same day, the cats will be returned to you for release the following day.

Trapping stray and feral cats

- 1) **Make a reservation at a participating veterinary hospital.**
- 2) **Feed the cats** at the same time and place each day.
- 3) **Borrow the traps from the clinic you intend to bring the cats to.** (A \$50 per trap deposit is required)
- 4) **Advise your neighbors** not to feed the stray cats. They should keep their own cats indoors.
- 5) **Prepare the area** to hold the cats before and after the trip to the clinic. A garage or other warm, sheltered area is best. Spread newspapers to catch the stool, urine, and food. Prepare the vehicle you will use. A plastic liner will prevent permanent urine damage. Always remove soiled liners promptly.
- 6) **Set the traps.** It may take several days to trap the cat. Don't trap in the rain or heat of day unless there is adequate protection. Cats can suffer exposure during storms or heatstroke in the sun. Set the trap where you normally feed the cats, before their normal feeding time. Dusk is usually best. Place the traps on a level surface. Cats are less likely to enter the trap if it wobbles. If trapping in a public area, try to conceal the traps from people passing (they may release or harm the cats). Bushes provide good camouflage.

Traps can be tricky for humans, too. If you are not familiar with how to use them, ask the clinic to demonstrate. Securely latch the rear door (if the trap has one). Open the front trap door and set the trap. After setting the door, check the release mechanism by pushing the trip plate down with a pencil. The door should close smoothly and lock securely. Once the trap is set, cover it with a towel or cloth. Expose the opening while still covering the top and sides, but not the back of the trap. The cover will help to camouflage the trap and serve to calm the cat after it is caught.

- 7) **Bait the traps.** Use smelly food. Canned mackerel is effective and inexpensive. Bring a cover and spoon for the food. Place a small amount of food outside the trap then a little leading inside. The primary bait serving should be behind the trip plate so the cat encouraged to go to the back of the trap to step on the plate. Some cats are skilled at stealing food from traps. Try tying a piece of meat to dangle over the trip plate. Make sure no other food is available.

Mothers and kittens are attracted to each other. Place the captured kittens or mother in a closed cat carrier facing the back of trap. Thus you can use them to attract each other to the traps. Never put another animal in the trap. Even mothers may hurt their kittens if frightened. Note that Spay Pasco will only accept kittens older than 3 months so they can receive valid rabies vaccines.

- 8) **Check the traps** frequently. Don't linger within sight of the cats, or they will be scared off. However, don't leave the traps unattended either. Trapped cats are vulnerable, and passersby may release the cat or steal the trap. Bring a flashlight if trapping at night. Check the traps periodically from a distance without disturbing the cats.

Caretaker Instructions for Trapping (continued)

- 9) **Cover the trap** as soon as a cat is caught. Uncovered, the cat may panic and injure itself thrashing in the trap. Remove the trap from the area.
- 10) **Check the cat** for a collar or tipped ear. If a nursing female is captured, check the area for kittens. This female should be released within 24 hours to nurse her kittens. Cover the cat again. If some other wild animal or an unintended cat is captured, release the animal in a quiet area nearby. (See 15.)
- 11) **Hold the cats** in their traps until taking them to the clinic. **The cats must have NO FOOD AFTER midnight the night before surgery.** Water should be provided if the cat is held longer than 12 hours. Check them periodically. Cats usually will remain calm as long as they are covered. **DO NOT HANDLE THE CATS.** Wash hands and change clothes and shoes before handling your own pets to prevent spreading any contagious diseases. Don't allow children or pets near the traps. These are wild animals that will scratch and bite. Because feral cats are in contact with wildlife, and because they will readily bite and scratch, consider getting rabies vaccinations from the Health Department or your doctor. **ALL ANIMAL BITES ARE SERIOUS! IF BITTEN, SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION, AND DO NOT RELEASE THE CAT.** The cat must be quarantined.
- 12) **Bring the cats** to the clinic where your reservation is. You must pay \$10 toward the cost of veterinary care at the time you drop off the cat for surgery.
- 13) **Pick up the cats** at the time set by the clinic. Keep the cats in their traps in a warm, dry, secure area until the next morning. Cats are susceptible to heat and cold while recovering. They will be disoriented and unable to defend themselves. The traps provide protection essential for the health and safety of all cats, including nursing cats with kittens.
- 14) **Monitor the cats.** Many cats will not be fully recovered at the time of discharge from the clinic, and full recovery may take 24 hours. **NORMAL BEHAVIORS** during recovery include deep sleep, head bobbing, wobbly movements, rapid breathing, and shivering. Bleeding from the ear tip may occur but should stop by the next day. Continued bleeding from the surgery area is **NOT NORMAL.** Call the emergency contact number provided when the cats were discharged if you have any concerns.

Do not give the cats food or water in the traps while they are recovering. They will spill the water and may vomit if fed. Food and water may be provided in the morning when they are fully awake.
- 15) **Release the cats.** Once the cats are fully awake the next day, return them to the area in which they were captured. If a cat is not yet fully awake, or continues to exhibit any of the symptoms listed above, call the clinic for advice. Spay Pasco recommends against relocating cats, as they frequently disappear. Release the cat in an area where it can't run into a busy street. To release the cat, hold the trap facing away from you and open the door. Usually the cat will run out of the trap. If it is confused, tilt the back of the trap up and tap on the top to encourage it out. Never put your hand in the trap!
- 16) **Clean the trap and return it to the clinic within three days of surgery** to reclaim the deposit.