

FERAL CAT POST-OP CARE

- **ALLOW THE CAT TO RECOVER IN THEIR TRAP UNTIL READY FOR RELEASE** Keep the cat indoors on a secure, level surface, in the covered trap and make sure the cat is dry, in a temperature-controlled environment, and away from loud noises or dangers such as toxic fumes, other animals, or people. Feral cats are also less stressed if they are up on a table or bench, at eye level. When the cat is recovering from anesthesia he/she is unable to regulate their body temperature so it's important that the recovery location is temperature-controlled to keep the cat from getting too hot or too cold. A protected place such as a garage, covered porch or bathroom will usually do the trick. If the area is prone to ant infestations, consider another area or treat the area with insect spray (let it dry and air out completely before introducing the cat in its trap).
- Put your safety first. Keep the trap covered to reduce the cats' stress. Never open the trap doors or allow the cat out of the trap. Do not stick your fingers through the bars or attempt to handle the cat.
- Place newspapers or a towel under the trap to absorb urine and feces. It is a good idea to elevate the trap slightly above newspaper over plastic (an old shower curtain for example) to allow feces and urine to fall through the trap and away from the cat. Check the newspaper under the trap to see if it is soiled and if it is, change the paper.

MONITOR THE CAT

- Check the cat often for progress; ensure that the cat is breathing normally and is not bleeding from the surgical site (for females, this may require lifting the trap and looking underneath) or ear tip site. If a cat is vomiting, bleeding, having difficulty breathing, or not waking up, or you have major concerns about the cat, call and leave a message on our voice mail: (252) 916-7347.
- If a cat is vomiting while still unconscious, his 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 don't harm the cat by jostling him too much.
- All skin sutures are absorbable and do not need to be removed.

FOOD AND WATER

- The anesthesia may cause nausea, therefore food and water should not be offered until the cat is fully awake. Feed and provide the cat with water only after he/she regains consciousness.
- Wait ~8 hours after surgery before feeding adult cats. Kittens (4 months and younger) can be fed when fully awake – give them a small amount of canned food.
- When feeding the cat, lift the back door (slides up and down vertically) of the trap very slowly and allow only a small gap—one-half to one inch at most—to open. Slide a plastic lid with a little bit of food on it through the gap without putting your hand inside the trap. You can use a small cat food can or mayonnaise jar cover with the food on it. Water can then be poured in through the top of the trap (with a watering can, for example) into the cup or lid. Or you can cut up a square of newspaper and put the canned food on it and slip it into the trap, or mix canned food with water, roll into ball, and drop into trap. Please be aware that in insect-prone areas (such as garages or sheds), cat food could attract ants to the trap. To protect the cat, this should be monitored carefully.

RELEASING THE CAT AFTER SURGERY

Because a feral cat cannot be cared for as a regular pet cat, the best way to minimize stress and encourage healing is for her to return to her normal routine. The amount of stress they are under in captivity would only be prolonged by continuing to confine them. For cats who are more comfortable with human contact, it may be fine to extend the post-surgical confinement.

Make sure all cats are fully awake, clear-eyed, and alert before release.

Feral male cats: Male cats can be returned to the trapping site 24 hours following surgery, as long as they are fully awake and do not require further medical attention.

Feral female cats: In some cases, females may need 48 hours of recovery, depending on their specific circumstances. You may return nursing mothers as soon as possible, once they completely regain consciousness so they can get back to their kittens. If the cat has been **nursing kittens** and they are less than 2 weeks old, release her 10 hours after surgery so that she may continue nursing as soon as possible. If the cat was **pregnant**, you may want to keep her 2 days just to make sure she is O.K. If a cat gets very aggravated or will not urinate or eat or drink, you should release sooner.

Release the cat in the same place you trapped him or her and where it is being fed. Place the front of the trap so that it opens on to an area as free of obstructions as possible and not facing a busy street. Pull back the trap cover and give the cat a minute or two in the trap to re-orient themselves to their familiar surroundings before opening the door. Open the front door of the trap. Do not be concerned if the cat hesitates a few moments before leaving. The cat is simply reorienting itself to their surroundings. Sometimes a cat can “disappear” for a few days after returned. He/she will appear eventually. Resume the feeding schedule and continue to provide food and water—the cat may eat when you are not around.

Fresh food, water, and shelter need to be made available to the released cat. After release, frequent visits should be made to the site to ensure that cat has fully recovered and there are no complications.

THESE ARE SCARED UNTAMED ANIMALS. PLEASE BE CAREFUL WHEN HANDLING THE TRAP WITH A CAT INSIDE. IT IS RARE, BUT IF BITTEN, SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION AND QUARANTINE THE CAT.

What are signs of post-surgical complications?

Because you cannot handle the cat to check her incision, you will have to judge her behavior. Though post-op complications in feral cats are extremely rare, all surgeries carry some degree of risk. Anything out of the ordinary like lethargy, persistent vomiting or diarrhea, and weight loss are potential signs of post-surgical complications.

POST-RELEASE

Thoroughly clean the traps with a nontoxic disinfectant when the returning is complete. Whether the traps are borrowed or your own, they should be cleaned 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.

For more detailed post-surgery instructions or more information on feral cats, visit:

www.alleycat.org/PostSurgery.