

## Very Important Discharge Instructions for Feral Cat Caretakers

**Thank you** for helping lessen the burden of cat overpopulation. Here are some guidelines to help keep you safe & help your feral have an easy post operative experience. Cats are given a long acting anesthetic for their surgery & may be only partially recovered at discharge since full recovery may take 24 hours.

**Prepare a sheltered area** for holding the cats after surgery. In the summer, a covered porch on the shady side works well. In the winter, a garage works well if you elevate the trap with 2x4's so the trap isn't on the cold cement floor. Keep cats away from drafts. Cats recovering from anesthesia are particularly prone to chilling which will prolong recovery & may be dangerous. Place newspapers on the floor to catch urine, stool, & food that will fall from the trap.

- After surgery, please keep the cats in their traps until the next morning.
- Be sure traps are loosely covered with a large sheet or towel which provides protection & security. The covering keeps the cats calm. Do not use tarps which would make it difficult to breathe.
- Do not continually lift sheets after initial monitoring that first day. The idea is to keep them calm & they don't need humans staring at them.
- Many cats will be groggy & need to sleep overnight. Please do not disturb them by reaching into the trap - they often overreact & may bite!
- Cats are susceptible to heat & cold while recovering from anesthesia.
- Normal behaviors that occur during recovery include deep sleep, head bobbing, wobbly movements, fast breathing, & shivering. No cat should be released the next day if it is still showing these signs.
- Abnormal behaviors during recovery include continued bleeding from the surgery area. Bleeding from the left ear crop is expected but should stop by the time of release the next day.
- Once the cats are fully alert & able to stand without being wobbly, they may be offered food & water. Some cats may be able to eat a small meal & some water the evening following surgery. It is important not to feed them too much as they may vomit if they eat too much.
- Fill water bowls with only a half an inch of water at the bottom. This will keep the cat dry and safe. Wobbly cats will knock over water bowls. They are in a tight place & will use the trap for all their relieving needs. Use one end of the trap for food & water. You can fill water bowl with a watering can through the side or top of the trap grate.
- A safe way to feed & get hydration into cats while trapped is to put wet (canned) food on a paper plate mixed with extra water to make gruel. Choose a side you want the trap to have the food on and lift the trap up and over the plate squishing the plate of gruel through the grating floor. This manner will keep your fingers safe & the cats will get extra water in the food.

**THE MORNING FOLLOWING SURGERY:** Cats can be fed a large meal & some water. Again, watch your fingers. If using the water bowl idea (above) make sure it's not too high. Remember you will not want water spilling later on when you transport cat back to its colony.

**RELEASING THE CATS - ONLY RELEASE CATS THAT ARE FULLY AWAKE!!** If cats are fully awake the next day, they can be released in the same location from which they were trapped. Relocating cats is rarely successful. They will either be driven off by territorial cats or other animals or follow their natural instinct to return home. If you are bringing animal to a new safe barn home, be sure to look over the barn cat buddy protocol and discuss this with cat's new caretaker.

To release the cat, point the back of the trap away from danger, such as a busy street. Pull away the cover so you can tell if the cat is facing the door, unlock back door, & lift the door away from the trap. Stand back and patiently allow the cat to leave at its own pace. Usually it will run away immediately.