



# Humane Cat Trapping How-To's





FixNation is a high-volume spay/neuter clinic committed to cats. FixNation promotes Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) as the most effective and humane solution to homeless cat population control. In addition to providing FREE spay/neuter surgeries for stray and feral cats, FixNation provides educational training on humane trapping, loans traps for free to the public, and supports ongoing cat colony care.

*Thank You!* for joining us. By working in your community to help cats, you're taking positive action, acting humanely, and taking much-needed responsibility. By humanely trapping homeless, feral and stray cats in your neighborhood, you are taking a step in ending pet overpopulation in Los Angeles, as well as making a huge difference in these kitties' lives.

## About this guide

While humane, being trapped and then having surgery is an incredibly stressful experience for the cat. Following these guidelines and best-practices, provides the best possible care for the cat during this process.

FixNation has developed these trapping and care instructions after working for more than 15 years with feral cats and community cat Trap-Neuter-Return programs. All of the instructions in this guide are for the safety of the cats, you, the trapper, and FixNation's clinic staff.

# Step 1

## Getting started

### Know your trap

#### Size

There are small, medium and large traps. Decide the size you need based on the size of the cat you are trapping and what you can fit in your car.

#### Mechanics

The ins and outs of your trap.

**Trap door** – The front of the trap where the cat will enter.

**Sliding door** – The back of the trap, which you will use to release the cat the next day after surgery.

**Trip plate** – This is located about three-fourths of the way to the back of the trap; this flips slightly up when the trap is open and set, and it is what the cat steps on to trigger the trap shut.

**Center handle** – Located on the top of the trap; always carry the trap by the center handle, not by the ends, so you don't get scratched or bitten.

Note: These instructions assume that you're using "Tomahawk" brand traps. Specifics may be different if you are using another type of trap.

# Step 2

## Prepare your trap

### **1. Line the bottom of the trap with newspaper.**

Cats don't like walking on the trap wire, and the newspaper helps to keep their feet from going through the bars when you pick up the trap.

### **2. Find a cover for the trap.**

If FixNation can't provide you with a cover, simply use a towel, a blanket or some sort of cloth material as a trap cover. The material should be big enough to fully cover the trap, reaching all the way down to the bottom of each side. If it doesn't fully cover the trap, then use two covers.

### **3. Remove FixNation masking tape ID letters.**

If there are any ID letters taped to the cover or trap, these are from a previous cat. Unique ID letters are placed on the trap and the cover every time a trap comes into the clinic. These ID letters are how we match up the cat, the trap and the right paperwork throughout the day. This might seem like a small detail, but it's critical to make sure you get the right cat back!

# Step 3

## Setting your trap

### 1. Open the trap door.

You open the trap door by pushing the top of the door in and pulling the bottom of the door upward.

### 2. Look for the hook pin.

There is a small hook pin on the top of the right side of the trap. This hook pin attaches to a tiny metal pole along the right side of the trap, running from the door to the trip plate. Pull the hook pin towards you and the trap door. The hook holds the trap door in an open position, which also raises the trip plate. When the cat steps on the trip plate, it causes the hook to release the trap door and close the trap.

### 3. Lock the sliding door.

When you lock the back of the trap, the sliding door, make sure the eyehole clip is up over the loop post and then securely lock it in place with the clip lock. Once the trap is locked, LEAVE IT LOCKED.

### 4. Is it locked? Check again!

DOUBLE AND TRIPLE CHECK THAT THE SLIDING DOOR IS SECURELY LOCKED!



# Step 4

## Feeding before trapping

### 1. Choose the feeding/trapping area.

Bushes around a feeding area are places where cats are likely to hide, and they provide good camouflage for the trap. You can also set your traps alongside a building or house, so they look less conspicuous. You can even disguise the traps with branches if need be. Generally you don't want to position two traps right next to each other. Spread them out a little, or you can set them out one at a time in one particular spot.

**If you are trapping in a public area:** make sure the feeding station is away from traffic, both vehicle and pedestrian. You don't want pedestrians to notice them. Passersby may not understand that you are trying to help, and not harm, the cat.

### 2. Feed at the same time and place each day.

Feed regularly for two weeks to get the cats used to a routine, which helps ensure he/she shows up when ready to trap.

### 3. Then, withhold food.

Withhold food at that same time the day or night before you're going to trap, so the cat will be hungry. Be sure to notify others in your neighborhood who may also feed so that they don't leave food out before you trap.

**Example:** if you plan on trapping on Tuesday night (for a Wednesday reservation), do not feed on Monday night. It is important that the cat is hungry the night you trap, as he/she'll go into the traps more quickly and easily.

# Step 5

## Preparing to hold cats

### 1. Choose the holding area for your trapped cat.

Proper holding of cats keeps them safe and calm. Choose a holding area that meets the following requirements:

**A safe, indoor location.** Laundry rooms, bathrooms, heated/ventilated enclosed patios, etc. Garages work as long as the temperature outside is mild, but make sure you can lock it securely.

**Not in a vehicle!** This is very unsafe, as cars cannot provide enough ventilation AND security at the same time. Also, temperature changes can happen incredibly fast in vehicles.

**Warm in winter, cool in summer.** Temperatures should be regulated and moderate, not extreme, at all times. When the weather heats up outside, the temperature in garages, storage rooms, laundry rooms and other enclosed areas may rise to intolerable levels. Heat stroke can happen very quickly. Likewise, during colder weather, these areas may be unheated, drafty or exposed. Cool down your holding area with fans and proper ventilation or warm it up with adequate heating. Remember, if it's not comfortable for you, it's even less comfortable for the cat.

**Well-ventilated!** This seemingly minor detail can't be stressed enough: if a holding area is too small, stuffy, or cramped and there is not enough ventilation, your cat is in jeopardy of dying. Likewise, if you have too many blankets on the traps to keep them warm, your cat may not be getting enough air. Be extremely cautious that your holding area provides adequate ventilation for your cat.

## Holding area, continued.

**Shhh!** The area should be quiet and away from people so that the cat remains calm; however, it should be an area that is convenient for you since you're going to need to periodically check on the cat throughout the night.

**Dry and free of toxic fumes, pets or other animals.**

Cats who get wet or damp can become hypothermic quickly. Also, they have an extremely sensitive sense of smell, and fumes in small, enclosed areas can become toxic quickly. Make sure you don't allow your Felix or Fido to go anywhere near the trapped cat.

**Big enough for each trap to sit safely on the ground.**

Don't stack traps on top of each other in your holding area. Traps that are stacked on top of each other run the risk of not having enough ventilation for the cat. The cat can also thrash around, which could cause a trap to fall. Or, cats could injure each other through the bars of the trap when in close proximity.

### Safety Note: Plastic Liners

When preparing your vehicle to transport cats to FixNation, **BE CAREFUL IF USING THIS PLASTIC** to line the floor of your car. Make sure the plastic is not wrapped around the trap in any way!

**PLASTIC CAN CAUSE SUFFOCATION AND/OR HEAT STROKE FOR A CAT WHEN WRAPPED AROUND A TRAP.**

**NEVER USE PLASTIC BETWEEN OR OVER TRAPS BECAUSE OF THE RISK OF SUFFOCATION AND/OR HEAT STROKE.**



# Step 6

## Preparing to transport

### 1. Prepare your vehicle for the trip to FixNation.

Transport safely

**Protect your cars interior.** Line it with an old blanket and then use newspaper on top of it in case of spraying, urinating or defecating. Puppy “pee pads” make great protectors, as they have a light plastic on one side and absorbent material on the other like a diaper. You can buy these at most pet stores.

**Don't use your trunk or the open bed of a truck or Jeep.** None are safe situations for cats. In the trunk of a car, cats will not get enough ventilation. Transporting cats in an open bed truck or Jeep is both unsafe and extremely terrifying to cats. If you don't have an appropriate vehicle for transportation, make arrangements with a friend or rent a vehicle for the day.

**Stack traps only when necessary.** Be extremely careful when stacking traps on top of each other during transport (the only time you may briefly stack traps). Traps that are stacked on top of each other run the risk of not having enough air flow into them. Also, urine and/or feces from top traps will go right through to the bottom ones unless you use puppy pads or newspaper between the stacked traps.

**If traps must be stacked inside a vehicle,** be sure to secure them with bungee cords or other restraints so they don't tip over and potentially open and release the cat. If it seems precarious, don't take the risk!

# Step 7

## Trapping time!

Refer to the “Trapping Checklist” at the back of this booklet. Gather everything you’ll need in an easy-to-carry box or bag.

### 1. Timing is everything.

Set the trap just before normal feeding time. Put the trap exactly where you’ve been feeding the cat for the past two weeks. Dusk is usually the best time to set traps. Don’t trap in the heat of day without adequate protection for the trap. Cats are vulnerable in the traps and could suffer from heatstroke in the sun. Please use common sense.

### 2. Place your trap on a level surface.

Cats are less likely to enter a trap if it wobbles.

### 3. Bait the trap.

We recommend using tuna, mackerel or sardines for starters – they are nice n’ smelly and attract cats. You know what they like to eat, so decide ahead of time what you want to use.

**Make a food trail.** Do this by dribbling 3 to 4 tiny bits of food down the center of your trap on the newspaper, leading from the front to the back. You can also pour juice from the food along this trail to make it even smellier and enticing for the cat. Place a tiny bit of food at the entrance of the trap to encourage the cat to walk in, but not so much that the cat gets a full stomach before triggering the trip plate.

**Make and position the food “plate.”** Using aluminum foil, make a 4” x 4” (inches) square and position it on the ground where you plan to place the back of the trap.

Spoon about a tablespoon of your bait onto the foil square.

**Set the trap on the food.** Simply place the back of the trap on top of the aluminum foil and food, so that the food squishes up through the wire bars of the trap floor. You want to make sure to position the food/foil square so that it's between the trip plate and the very back of the trap, the sliding door. This way, when you pick up your trap, no food will remain in the trap.

#### **4. Now you're ready to set the trap for action!**

Go ahead and cover the trap with your cover of choice as reviewed in STEP 2. You'll want to drape your cover over the trap so that the top and sides are covered, but leave the front and the back somewhat exposed that way the cat can still see and smell the bait food in the back.

#### **5. Finish trapping and feeding by Midnight.**

This is critical – pick up all traps by Midnight – whether or not you've caught any cats. If cats eat after Midnight, it poses a serious surgery risk as they can vomit while under anesthesia and possibly die. Exception: kittens 2 to 4 months old as they are fed one teaspoon of wet food at 6AM the day of surgery. This is because kittens cannot go without food for very long because their blood sugar levels will get too low.

#### **Quick Tip: Dealing with ants**

You may encounter a problem with ants swarming your bait food. If this happens, try making a circle around the trap with either chalk or with dishwashing liquid. Ants don't like to cross either of these substances, and this can prevent the ants from getting at the food.

# Step 8

## You trapped a cat! Now what?

### 1. Cover the trap and remove it from the area.

Cover the cat immediately and move the trap. If other cats see their friend in captivity, you likely won't be able to trap any other cats that night.

### 2. Move the cat to your holding area.

This should away from any other "set" traps until you are done for the night.

#### **Check that you have the correct animal.**

**Check for a right eartip**, the sign that it has previously been fixed.

**Check for illness and injury.** Cats with visible signs of upper respiratory infection will be turned away from surgery. Severely injured cats may also be turned away and referred to a full-service vet.

**Cover the cat back up quickly.** Uncovered, the animal may panic and hurt itself thrashing around in the trap.

### 3. Only one cat per cage.

If you end up with two or more cats in one trap, **DO NOT** separate them. Instead, bring one empty trap with you for each additional cat so that each cat can go home in his/her own individual trap after surgery. Don't forget the covers as well. If you do not have enough empty traps, still bring the cats into the clinic the day of surgery as FixNation can provide additional traps to you, depending on availability.

# Reminders...

Don't forget

## 1. Food After Midnight

If there is visible food, plates or bowls inside the trap, the **cat will be turned away for surgery**, except kittens. There is a strong likelihood the cat ate after midnight, which poses a risk of vomiting during surgery. Do not put any bowls or cans in the trap.

## 2. Monitor the cats throughout the night.

## 3. Be on time for your FixNation appointment!

# TNR

## Checklists for Success

These checklists are culled from the content of this guide. Refer to the appropriate sections for in-depth explanations.

### Equipment Checklist

- Trap & Trap cover
- Flashlight
- Bait
- Can opener
- Spoon, fork, knife
- Aluminum foil
- Newspaper
- Masking tape
- Sharpie® marker
- Wet wipes
- Chalk or dishwashing liquid (ants)
- Plastic water bottle, full
- Twine or string
- Lid or baggie (remaining food)
- Scissors
- Doggie “pee pads”

### Preparing for Trapping

- Make a reservation
- Check the weather
- Line trap with newspaper
- Find a cloth trap cover
- Remove FixNation stickers
- Trap the night before surgery
- Pick the trapping area
- Secure cat holding area
  - Indoors
  - Regulated Temperature
  - Ventilated
  - Dry
  - No Toxic Fumes
  - No Pets
  - Quiet
  - Not A Vehicle
  - No Stacking
  - Prep the vehicle

### Trapping

- Good weather
- Trap before feeding time
- Trap on level surface

- Bait the trap
- Set the trap
- Cover the trap
- Remain close by
- Finish trapping by Midnight
- Kittens are over 2 lbs.
- A trapped Mom's kittens are more than 4 weeks old

### Once Cat is Trapped

- Fully cover the trap
- Get to the holding area
- Check the animal
- No food after Midnight, except kittens; Water OK.
- Feed kittens under 4 months (1 tsp wet food at 6am)
- Monitor throughout night
- Careful not to get bitten or scratched

### Surgery Day

- Arrive between 7-8:30 a.m. \$25 if late.
- Fill out "Admission" paperwork THEN bring cats inside
- Provide good phone numbers
- Check messages all day
- Get cat by 5 p.m. \$25 if late.
- Back to safe holding area for recovery
- Feed wet food between 6-10 p.m.
- Continue to monitor
- If major problems, call FixNation or a Vet immediately

### Releasing Post-Surgery

- The next morning (or as directed)
- A safe spot where trapped (Do not relocate)
- Keep trap covered
- Open back sliding door
- Wave Good-bye for now!





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