

INSTRUCTIONS FOR HUMANE TRAPPING OF FERAL OR RESCUED CATS AND KITTENS

DISCUSSION: The following information provides the basis for humane trapping. It, by no means, covers the many situations that can arise. Since trapping takes place in various circumstances and locations, adjustments will need to be made. **We have endeavored to focus on the welfare of the cats and kittens as our first priority.**

No matter how ardently you may want to "capture" the cat or kitten, responsible planning and attention to detail is essential, unless an emergency situation exists and the cat or cats must be trapped immediately. This will assure the

least amount of stress for all concerned. **Your compassion and commitment during the ordeal of trapping and surgery can impact upon how the cats and kittens adjust during foster care, adoption, post-surgical confinement and upon return.**



You can make a difference by the quality of care you provide. Go over each detail of the process until you have a clear and concise understanding of what needs to be accomplished before you begin trapping! If the area to be trapped is not cat friendly, you will need to negotiate and educate those persons who do not understand the trap-neuter and return program. This can be a major concern and obstacle for the Caretaker. You may require assistance with this very important undertaking.

PERSONS WHO ARE FEEDING: People who are feeding usually have valuable information about the cats. They can identify the cats, give histories of those already neutered, pregnant, if kittens are present, numbers, descriptions, if shelter is available or additional pertinent information that would assist in trapping and long-term managed care. Ask for their support with the trapping or other tasks such as transporting to the veterinarian, post-operative care, adoption of kittens, foster care as well as continued commitment to feeding. **(We recommend that feeding locations and a regular feeding**

schedule be in place for two weeks before trapping begins). If people are only able to do the feeding and it is done responsibly, welcome them, as this is one task already committed to. If there are other persons in the area who are cat friendly, they may want to be involved. Organizing the trap, neuter and return with persons already on the premises can be helpful.

GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS



VETERINARIANS: Chose a veterinarian that has experience with feral and rescued cats and kittens. Be sure everyone is healthy enough for surgery. If you have chosen a spay–neuter clinic, a full–service veterinarian may not be available. It is important for you to know of a full–service veterinarian who has

experience with feral and rescue cats and kittens, **in advance of trapping.** When bringing cats or kittens in for surgery, bring carriers with you, so the cat or kitten can be placed into the carrier following surgery – unless boarding traps are being used. If possible, everyone should be treated for worms, ear mites, vaccinated and given a long–term antibiotic injection. Inoculation for Rabies should be given to adult cats. A treatment with Advantage or Revolution is helpful, especially during flea season and smaller doses of Advantage can be given to kittens. Additional tests and treatments can be discussed with your veterinarian, such as dental exam, blood analysis, FELV–FIV testing and fecal exam. Some vets give a long–term antibiotic injection to ward off any possible infection. **Be sure the cat or kitten has been given the proper care and is healthy before being considered for release.**

LACTATING FEMALE: Generally, we do not recommend spaying a lactating female unless the kittens have been identified and are safely being cared for. Leaving un–weaned kittens unattended for any length of time can put the kittens in jeopardy. Following surgery, there can also be complications. If a lactating female is trapped, the caretaker should be notified immediately and considering the circumstances, a decision can be made whether or

not to spay her. If there is a possibility of lactating females and kittens, trap in the morning and not in the evening. If you are experienced, you may be able to tilt the trap up and look underneath to see what the nipples look like. Have another person with you to make this decision or consult the vet. At best, it complicates trapping when there are kittens and lactating females present and you need the wisdom of a Solomon to make the hard decisions. Each situation can present a challenge.

If you do not spay and bring the lactating female back, take notice of where she goes, which will probably be directly to the kittens. Keep an eye on her during the next weeks and set up a separate feeding area just for her and the kittens, close to where she was returned. In this way, you may be able to keep an eye on her kittens and they will all be easier to capture.

We understand that if you look at the big picture, spaying the lactating female is advised. In our view, the kittens are vulnerable without their mother. Continued trapping without sacrificing the kittens for the sake of population control is embracing "The No Kill Movement."

ALTERNATIVE POST-SURGERY BOARDING REQUIREMENTS:

Several major organizations that provide spay and neuter services for feral cats believe 24 hours post-up boarding is sufficient, absent extraordinary circumstances, due to the stress associated with confinement. Feral Cat Coalition (San Diego), Operation Catnip (Florida), SNAP (Texas) and Best Friends Catnippers (Los Angeles) base their findings on extensive field experience with satisfactory results.

FCCC POST- SURGERY BOARDING REQUIREMENTS FOR FERAL CATS AND KITTENS: Minimum boarding requirements for feral cats and kittens:

We recommend keeping males for two days and females for a minimum of three days. If abortion and spaying are performed, a day or two longer may be necessary. During boarding, observe how they are recovering. Are the stools and urine normal, any blood or pus present and are they are eating? If in doubt, check with a vet before return.

It is essential to provide the cats with a safe, warm and enclosed place to recover, a good quality of nutritious food and Vitamin C are recommended. After the stress of trapping, sedation, anesthesia, surgery, vaccinations, Rabies vaccination, Advantage or whatever else may be required at surgery, we feel the cats are NOT AT THEIR PEAK PERFORMANCE FOR SURVIVAL and require a boarding period before being released.

Members of FCCC have had personal experiences with cats that have been returned 24 hours following surgery and have survived. We have also had experiences where they have not. **Because of the various circumstances of trapping, location and return, each person must make their own decisions about boarding and release. From our personal experience and in accordance with guidelines from other feral cat organizations, we offer information and suggestions on how to safely and humanely board before release. We teach these requirements in our workshops.**

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SAFE BOARDING OF FERAL CATS BY NEIGHBORHOOD CATS NY

Caring for cats held in traps: Neighborhood Cats "During the trapping period and following surgery, the cats will be held in their traps – they should never be let out except while at the vet and when they're being returned to their colony. We have encountered resistance at times from well-meaning people, including animal welfare professionals, who believe it's cruel to leave a cat in a trap for more than 48 hours. Our experience is quite the contrary. Feral cats don't act like domestics. Whether they're in a large cage or a trap, they will tend to remain still in one place. They also prefer to be in tighter rather than wide-open enclosures – apparently, they feel more secure. As long as the trap is long enough (at least 36 inches) for them to huddle at one end and eat at the other, and the trap is kept covered with a thin sheet, they will be fine."

The instructions here are written with multiple cats in mind, but apply equally, if you're only dealing with one or two cats.

Materials needed:

- Traps large enough to double as cages (preferable 36" long) and with rear doors (a must)

- Trap dividers (at least two), sometimes called trap isolators – they look like small pitchforks
- Newspaper
- Water dishes, small with flat bottoms
- Food dishes small
- Cotton sheets (for trap covers)
- Towels–small
- Plastic ground cloth or tarp
- (Optional) Long craft tables

Preparing the holding space:

Spread the plastic ground cloth or tarp on the ground. This will protect any urine or other waste materials from getting on the floor. If you have tables, put them on the ground cloth – using tables to rest the traps on makes it easier to clean and feed, as opposed to having to bend down to the floor. If you use tables, cover them with plastic. Place the traps several inches apart either on the ground or on the table, each one covered with a sheet. Have the rear and front doors of all traps facing the same way.

The holding space itself should be secure, dry, quiet and warm (NOTE) In the hours after surgery, the cat's body temperature will drop; so the recovery space during that time **MUST BE WARM**. Do not place post–surgery cats in a cold room.

Cleaning and feeding:

1. Use the trap dividers to isolate the cat on one end of the trap. You do this by lowering one divider through the bars of the trap from above, then by lowering a second divider right behind it also from above. We highly recommend you use two trap dividers until you're comfortable with the process and know each cat. We've seen aggressive cats push aside the tongs of a single divider that wasn't perfectly inserted and escape, especially soon after they were trapped and were still wired. If you want to be even extra– safe, then you can get the cat to move from one end of the trap to the other usually by uncovering the sheet on the end you want to work on. The cat will seek cover at the other end. Occasionally, you might have to poke the cat or give the trap a little shake for the cat to move.

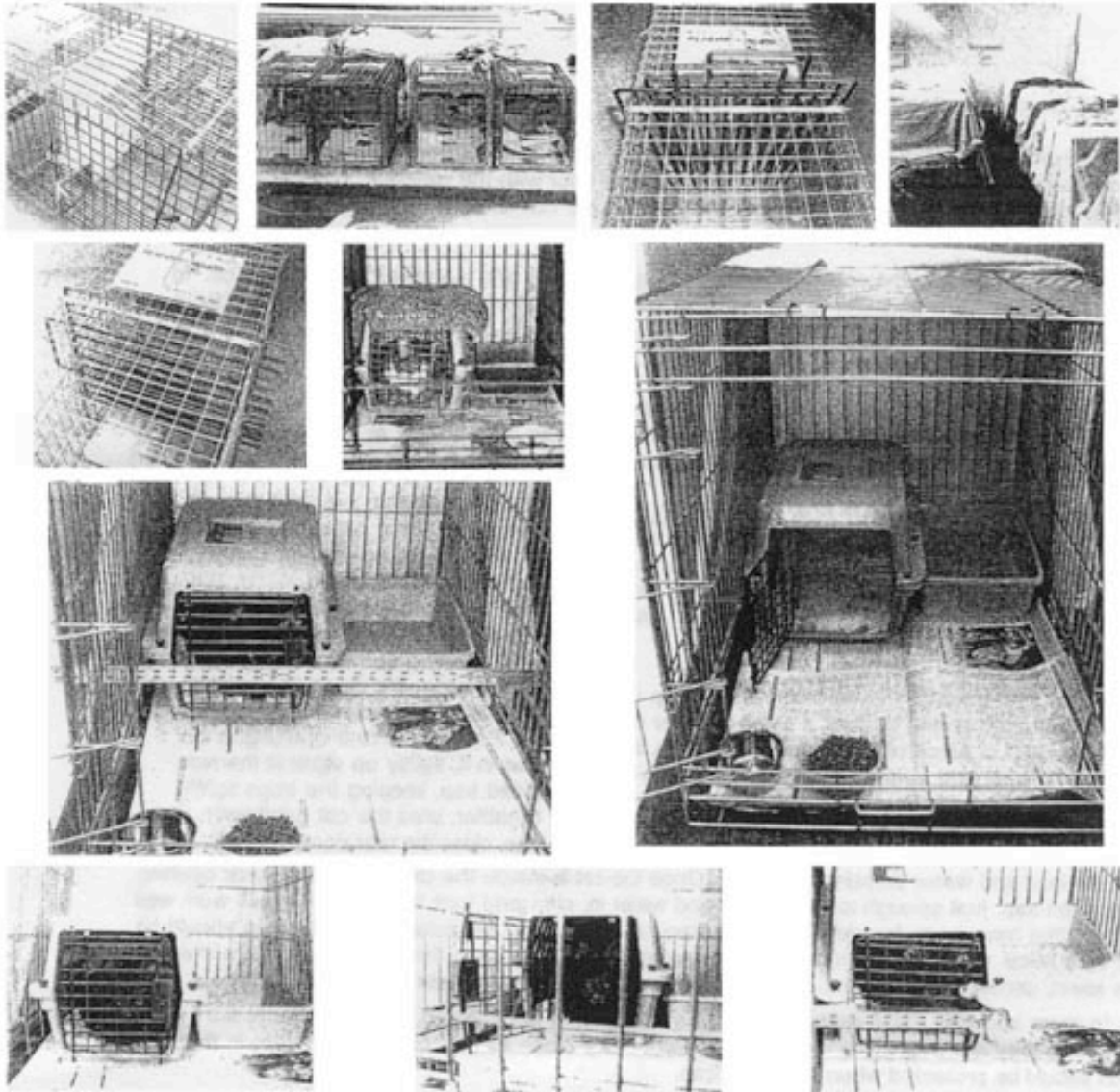
2. While the cat's isolated on one end, line the bottom of the trap on the other end with newspaper. This will serve as "litter." If you try to use regular litter in a pan, the cat will just trash it and create even more of a mess. At the rear door end of the trap, put in the food and water in their dishes. (NOTE: No food or water after 10:00 PM, the night before surgery.

3. Go to the other end of the trap and isolate the cat against the end you just worked on. Again, line the bottom with newspaper and, if you're at the trap door end, put in the small towel. The cats like lying on it, especially when it's up against the slanted trap door. If possible, work on the trap door end first and the rear door side last. That way, there is no chance the cat will end up sitting in the food and water after you've just put it in.

4. Ideally, repeat this process twice a day. This will keep the traps relatively clean and the cats calm.

Don't try to be perfect – the space will probably end up smelling, but when the cats are returned, you just roll up the plastic, throw it away and the smell will dissipate. While the cats are being returned, you can replace the ground cloth with a fresh one.

Fostering a Feral Cat – Neighborhood Cats "Fostering a feral cat safely means not letting the cat out in your bathroom and hoping somehow you'll get it in the carrier. Or releasing the cat into your bedroom then trying to figure out how you'll ever get the cat out from under your bed. Remember that your environment is totally unfamiliar to a feral cat and you are perceived as a threat, especially in this strange new territory. You have to give the cat a space where it feels safe and where it can either learn about his new surroundings, if he's interested in doing so, or quietly retreat. That's what the Feral Cat Setup allows you to do. In rare cases, where someone has a good reason for trying to adopt a feral cat, the chances of a successful transition to indoor life are greatly increased by use of the Setup for at least two or three weeks until the cat is visually comfortable, at which time the cage door can be left open for the cat to come and go as he pleases.



Materials needed:

- Cage, at least 36 " x 24" x 20" Small cat carrier (the smallest)
- Small litter pan (the smallest—can use aluminum baking pan)
- Yardstick
- An extender Cotton sheet
- Newspaper
- Food and water dishes
- Twist tie

- Small towel
- Litter

2. The Setup (without the cat):

Line the bottom of the cage with newspaper. Place the carrier in one back corner of the cage and then put the litter pan next to it in the other back corner. Make sure the carrier door, when it's open rests against the side of the cage and doesn't swing open into the middle. Put food dish and water dish inside.

3. Putting the cat inside:

- a) Have the vet deliver the cat to you inside the small carrier, or transfer the cat into the carrier from a trap with a rear door. Have the towel already in the carrier.
- b) Place the carrier (containing the cat) inside the cage in the back corner.
- c) Close and lock the cage door
- d) Slide the yardstick through the bars of the cage so that it securely bars the carrier door from opening.
- e) Open the cage door, but always keep the door between your body and the interior of the cage. This way, you can shut it quickly if you need to.
- f) Reach in and unlock the carrier door
- g) Close the cage door
- h) Remove the yardstick, then use it to move the carrier door against the side of the cage
- i) Secure the carrier door open by using the twist tie to tie it to the side of the cage
- j) Cover the cage with the cotton sheet to calm the cat.

4. Feeding and cleaning:

The cat's natural tendency will be to run into the carrier whenever your approach. If it gets bold, you might have to try removing the cotton cover from the crate, making a loud sound or gently poking the cat with the yardstick. Once the cat is in the carrier, you untie the carrier door from the side of the cage, use the yardstick to close the carrier door and then bar the carrier door with the yardstick. You can then open the cage door and do what you have to. Also,

you can lock the carrier door and remove the carrier and the cat while you clean.

5. Really uncooperative cat:

If the cat just won't go in the carrier, he gotten pretty comfortable and is unlikely to bolt out of the cage. In this case, use the arm extender to reach in and pull out the litter pan, food dish, etc. BUT REMEMBER keep the cage door in front of you at all times so you can close it quickly and keep an eye on the cat in case it tries to bolt."

Note: The above-described method from Neighborhood Cats can also be used for prolonged care if treatment is required and post-surgical boarding as an alternative to using traps. We have adopted these guidelines for post-surgical boarding, foster care and relocation.

TRAP TO TRAP TRANSFER FOR POST-SURGERY BOARDING: You will need traps that have rear openings for transferring the cat. **You will also need someone to help you with this method.** Do not try to do trap to trap transfer alone and be sure you are in a closed and secure place while this is being done. This method is another way of boarding cats post-surgery when the 36" traps and cages are not available and you are using the smaller traps. **AN EXPERIENCED PERSON SHOULD BE WITH YOU THE FIRST TIME YOU DO TRANSFER.**

The object is to transfer the cat in the soiled trap into a clean trap that has been prepared with layers of clean newspaper on the bottom, a small towel or fleece, food and water. Prepare the clean trap, putting the small towel or piece of fleece against the trap door end. Place both traps on an even surface, table or floor that is solid and even. Protect the area with newspaper or plastic. First, lift the rear opening of the clean trap about 8-9". Place the rear door of the soiled trap with the cat in it, tightly up against the rear opening of the clean trap. Slowly open the rear-sliding gate on the soiled trap, keeping the traps tightly together, about 8-9". Once both rear openings are open and tightly together, prod the cat gently with a ruler so it will run into the clean trap. Once the cat is inside the clean trap, close the rear door.

Have the food and water prepared in advance. Once the cat is inside the clean trap, lift the rear opening of the clean trap, just enough to slide the food and water in, shut and lock it. This method will work well with cats that have been trapped in traps less than 36". If possible, transfer to the clean trap should be done on a twice- daily basis or immediately after soiling. Be sure to keep the trap covered with a sheet or large towel, depending upon the temperature.

Under no circumstances leave traps outdoors with cats in them and do not ever leave a cat in a trap that is uncovered. Be sure all doors are closed in the room they are occupying and **DO NOT** put your face close to the trap or your fingers in the trap. Hands should be protected when handling the trap.

Returning the cat to the backyard area where it was trapped: If you are returning cats to the backyard where they were trapped, you may have the option of boarding them in a secure and safe small room or garage, adjacent to the yard, with a comfortable and secure hiding place inside, such as a cardboard box, small carrier or similar type enclosure with a warm bed, their food, water and a litter box. After the recovery period, you need only open the door and let them out into a secure and safe area. If the cat will be using the garage, shed, outbuilding or other structure in the yard-area as their shelter (where it was being held), be sure to leave a small opening to enter and leave when it is time to be let out. This structure will be their safe haven and it should be available for safety. **If this is not the case**, provide safe adequate shelter in the yard-area and put the litter and other smells from where the cat has been staying, around the outside of their new shelter. Put clean bedding inside the shelter. Feeding stations should also be protected and in a safe area.

PREGNANT FEMALE: The choice for a pregnant female to have surgery can be very personal. The surgical procedure for a pregnant female is performed routinely and with the proper post-operative care, she will do well. The post-operative confinement period for a pregnant female is a minimum of four to seven days, depending upon the length of pregnancy. The surgery is more complicated ask your vet for advice on the recovery period. **We recommend surgery**, because of the high rate of euthanasia in shelters for domestic kittens. There are also many high risk factors regarding a kitten's survival being born of a feral mother, in unsafe or hazardous conditions. The kitten modality rate is 65%. Many

mothers die in childbirth due to inexperience, mal-nourishment or complications. Consider also, that you may not have another chance to trap the mother or the kittens, after they are born. Taking all of these factors into consideration, surgery can be a humane choice. It is essential that post-operative care for the mother be committed and lovingly implemented with nourishing food and secure return.

HUMANE TRAPPING: Trapping can be more effective if the cats are being fed at a certain time and place before you begin trapping. If you trap in the morning, food should be withheld the night before. If you trap in the evening, withhold food 8–10 hours prior to trapping. **It is not advisable to withhold food longer than 24 hours unless there are special circumstances and the area is being closely monitored.** When cats and kittens go without food for longer periods, they tend to leave the area in search of food and take risks that could jeopardize their lives. **If you are trapping in large areas, with random or no regular feeding schedule in place, you will need to organize a feeding schedule with long-term managed care for the cats who will be returned following surgery before you schedule trapping. We recommend that cats in these areas be fed for 2–3 weeks at a safe location before trapping begins. A successful trapping does not involve running around the area looking for cats to trap. They will congregate and feel safer at their designated feeding station or area.**

EQUIPMENT: 36" x 10" x 12" or 32" x 11 " x 12" traps with dividers are recommended. Depending upon your budget, there are bargains online for traps. Large carriers, smaller kitten sized carriers, newspaper, paper towel, large plastic bags, can opener, spoons, aluminum foil, paper food holders, small paper plates, sheets, towels or blanket material to cover traps. Food to placed in traps are human consumption tuna, mackerel, sardines, chicken, smoked turkey, Kentucky Col. Chicken or any other food that will entice them. Volumes could be written about how to lure cats into traps and the various and sometimes-humorous ways they are finally captured or not captured.

PREPARING TRAPS: Line the bottom of the trap with approximately two sheets of newspaper or paper towel. It should not be thick enough to spring the trap. Cats do not like the feel of wire on their feet. Place the food all the way to the back of the trap. If cups are



made from aluminum foil, they can be pushed up against the wire in back and are less likely to move about or pulled over the pedal. Traps should be placed on even terrain. A trap that moves underfoot will discourage entry and may inadvertently spring the trap. Make sure they are steady

and the opening is not impaired. Do not put any type of container to hold food that is sharp (such as a can of food) into the trap. The cats and kittens will thrash about and could be seriously injured. Never use a sedative to trap a cat, as they will move off and their lives will be endangered. **CAUTION: Under no circumstances leave traps unattended. This is not a humane and responsible way to trap. Unattended traps, with cats or kittens left inside, is totally unacceptable. The traps can be stolen and any number of tragic events can take place. Traps should be in view or at a safe distance, so as not to disturb the cats. Common sense and a sense of humor are essential when trapping. Nothing should be done in an expeditious manner that would place the cats in jeopardy.** Do not trap in inclement weather. Cats and kittens in traps are traumatized and are susceptible to heat stroke. Rain and stormy weather is not considered safe, either for trapping or return, unless adequate shelter is available.

After the bait is in the trap, you can cover the trap, leave it uncovered, or cover the back half. The cover threatens some cats and kittens and others are threatened with no cover. There are no set rules. Whatever works with trial and error. **However, the trap must be covered immediately, once the cat or kittens are in the trap. Remove it to a quiet area away from the other traps and lift the cover to see if you have the correct animal. Place the cover quickly back over the trap. Trapped cats and kittens literally feel trapped and defenseless and are extremely frightened at being in an uncovered trap. Keeping the trap completely covered will reduce the stress. Immediately put them in the vehicle they will be transported in as this will also help calm them.**

Line the bottom of the area of the transporting vehicle (car or van) with layers of plastic, to keep the vehicle clean.



TRAPPING KITTENS: We recommend that, if the mother is present, the kittens be trapped or taken by hand before she is. **Her presence is essential to their survival.** Kittens should be at least partially weaned, before they are trapped, unless they have been abandoned or are in jeopardy. Special care of up-weaned kittens will be required and because of their age and trapping them may not be necessary. At four weeks, they may not be entirely weaned; but generally, feral and rescued kittens are easier to domesticate, between 6–8 weeks of age. There are really no set rules. Each little soul must be considered separately and given every chance for a better life. Having a mother cat with kittens that need to be trapped,

is a touchy situation, at best.

If the kittens have never had any human contact, they can be easily frightened and stressed in the trap. Special care must be taken, due to various circumstances that may have transpired prior to trapping, or if they are being taken directly from their mothers. It is not unusual to hear a mournful cry from the mother as she sees her kittens taken. She may also charge and try to attack you in the process. It can be a very difficult situation and emotionally charged for everyone. If you can manage at least two kittens (if there are more than one); it works better, as they can comfort each other.

If the mother is present, allow the kittens to remain near the mother, while in the trap. Depending upon the circumstances, this might be a good opportunity to set a trap for the mother, by putting the trap with the kittens in it on the opposite end of the trap you are setting for her. If this cannot be done, the mother cat should observe the kittens being taken away. If they are taken while she is gone, she will spend days and sometimes weeks looking for them. We recommend that if she is present, let her see what you are doing with her kittens. Move slowly and speak softly to her. Take some time to explain that they will be in safe and loving homes.

Thank her for the kittens and try to make as much eye contact as she will permit. Amazing mystical experiences have occurred between the mother and the Caretaker during the time her kittens are being taken from her. At that poignant moment, sensitivity to the mother is very important.

Trapping the mother as quickly as possible is essential once the kittens are taken to avoid another litter and putting her through the stress of pregnancy and birthing – AND having to look for and trap kittens and find homes for them, if you are lucky enough to find and capture them.

Discuss with your veterinarian the options for spay and neuter for kittens. There is pertinent data that recommends surgery as being safe at weight of two–three pounds. **Surgery should be performed by a veterinarian with experience in this field.** Make sure the kittens are not debilitated or sickly, as they may need special nourishment and care before surgery is considered. **Arrange with your veterinarian when immunization and surgery should be performed. After careful consideration, be sure the kitten's welfare comes first. We recommend that all kittens be considered for adoption and not be returned.**

POST-SURGICAL CONFINEMENT FOR

KITTENS: Kittens need to be in a safe, warm and protected place following surgery in preparation for domestication. A quiet room away from noise and drafts is essential while they are recuperating. A bathroom is a good first home following surgery. The recovery time is the same as for adults, but during their recovery, they should be petted, handled and held. Ask your veterinarian about post-operative care of kittens and what to look for.

Refer to document How to Domesticated and Care for Feral or Rescued Kittens. There is excellent online information re: kittens, feeding, weaning, etc.



RETURNING ADULT CATS: Following surgery, while the cats are in your care, be certain they are ready for return. If they do not look well, seek advice from your veterinarian. The cat should be returned

back to the original home site where it was trapped. It is important to return the cat around the same time of day or night it was trapped. TAKE YOUR TIME, when you arrive back. It may take a while for them to adjust to their surroundings. They can be disoriented and frightened from the ordeal. Place the carrier or trap near the original site where the cat was trapped, providing it is safe and quiet. If not, move it in close proximity. Carefully, open the door and step back, allowing them to exit when they feel safe to do so. **Do not disturb the trap by tipping or shaking as the cat may be disoriented and not want to leave until it has its " bearings."** Some will dash out immediately, while others may remain longer. Stay until they are safely out. Since their immune systems can be weakened from the stress of surgery and capture, be sure to provide plenty of food and water at their usual feeding place. **Never release a cat to an unfamiliar area.**

IF YOU HAVE ANY DOUBTS THAT THE CAT IS NOT FERAL AND IS A CANDIDATE FOR ADOPTION, THIS CAN BE DETERMINED WHILE at the vet or during post-surgery boarding, another reason for observation before release. If you cannot come to a conclusion, ask the advice of someone that has experience in this area.

RELOCATION: Do not attempt to relocate cats unless you are fully informed as to what steps need to be taken. If you can provide or know of a safe, sheltered place with committed care for relocation, **Refer to the Managed Care document for information about relocation.**

THE CRITERIA FOR RETURN AND LONG-TERM MANAGED CARE: Responsible and committed long-term managed care by a Caretaker/s should be in place and organized before returning cats or kittens back to their home site. It is inhumane to trap-spay and neuter a cat and knowingly release them to an unsupervised or low maintenance situation. This does not infer they should not be trapped, nor does it suggest that they be trapped and euthanized. **WE STRONGLY BELIEVE IN THEIR RIGHT TO LIFE AND HONOR THEM BY INCREASING THE QUALITY OF THEIR EXISTENCE - WHETHER THEY ARE IN THE TRAPS OR OUT OF THE TRAPS. RESPONSIBILITY AND LONG-TERM COMMITMENT TO THEIR CARE IS WHAT FERAL CARETAKING IS ALL ABOUT. WE ARE THEIR VOICES AND GUARDIANS.** Depending upon the

circumstances, It can take several weeks or longer to achieve stable groups of healthy cats and bring the colony (family) under population control. Continued monitoring is essential, as newcomers will need to be trapped, spayed–neutered, immunized and given a physical examination. The basics of long–term management should include daily feeding, fresh water, and provision of insulated shelters as waterproof sleeping places, on–going trapping and all other care necessary for their general welfare.

Our recommendations are personal and embody our vision for Feral Cat Caretakers' Coalition. They may change or be modified with time, research and experience. Our challenge is to reduce the population by saving lives and increasing the quality of the cats and kittens existence. If we do our work honorably, the numbers will be reduced and humane population control will be achieved. We sincerely understand the Caretakers will do their best to insure the survival of those entrusted to their care, and that their decisions and actions will be implemented according to their circumstances and heartfelt commitment. We are all, always learning and innovating.

Dona Cosgrove Baker, President and Founder, Feral Cat Caretakers' Coalition