

# Community Cat Colony Care

Community cats that have caretakers are known to live longer, healthier, and safer lives. Part of being a colony manager means keeping the cat's colony sites clean and safe.

The following is a basic guide on colony care management.



**EL PASO**  
**TNR**  
**BASICS**

## BE PROACTIVE!

- **The goal is to Trap-Neuter-Return all cats in the colony - and let the neighbors know that is the plan.**  
A short conversation stating your intentions early on can eliminate confusion down the road. Let them know they can contact you with questions or concerns.
- **Follow good cleaning and feeding protocols!**  
Remove trash and debris, even trash you did not create, to make the feeding station sanitary and unobtrusive. This helps avoid possible health code violations and maintain positive relations with local residents.

## FEEDING

### Location

- We recommend a **feeding station** to keep bowls in one place for easy cleanup and a tidy appearance.
  - If you feed on disposable plates or bowls, take them after feeding to throw away or recycle.
- Feeding stations should have a **low profile** and blend in with the immediate surroundings.
- **Do not** locate the station in a high traffic area, as the cats won't feel safe eating there.
- Place the station out of sight of the general public. It draws less attention to where the cats are being fed, affording them greater protection

### Diet

- **Canned food** is closest to the cats' natural diet. But, canned food can be messy, attract more pests in the summer, and freeze in the winter.
- **Dry food** is more easily managed.
- The amount of food put out should not exceed an adequate amount for the number of cats in the colony.
- Make sure there is **clean fresh water daily**.
  - Leave it available at all times
  - In cold weather, keep the water from freezing.

- In hot weather, keep ice cubes in the bowl or an ice pack under the bowl to keep the water cool.
- Avoid using metal bowls, as they get very hot!

### Schedule

- It is best to **feed once a day**, and at the same time each day.
  - **Daybreak** or **dusk** are the best times to feed, as cats are up and active then.
  - **Keep in mind:** if you have predators in the area, such as coyotes, they too are active at daybreak and dusk. In that case, consider feeding the cats during the day to minimize conflict.
- Keep the food available for **30 minutes to an hour**.
  - That amount of time allows you to monitor who is eating (the cats will learn to come at that time to eat) and keeps wildlife away.
  - After 30 minutes, pick up the remaining food. Leaving food out overnight may attract insects or wildlife, therefore, is not recommended.

### Maintenance

- Keep the feeding location neat and **clean**.
- Thoroughly clean bowls with soap and water every couple of days before refilling them.
  - Water bowls will become moldy if not cleaned
  - Dry food bowls should be kept free of debris such as leaves and dirt.
- Disposable plates or bowls need to be thrown away or recycled.
- Dirty feeding stations are a health risk for cats, an eyesore for the neighbors, and are more likely to attract insects and wildlife.

### Pest Control

- Sprinkle around the food bowl with Food Grade Diatomaceous Earth
- Use an ant proof bowl or the "moat method"
  - Fill a 9 x 13" baking pan with an inch or so of water and place the food bowl inside it.
- Wet food can attract more bugs, so cut back, or completely cut out, the amount of wet food that you feed. Be sure to add more dry food to compensate.

# Post – Operation Guidelines

*The following guidelines are intended for El Paso TNR volunteers to oversee during the post-operation and recovery process, ensuring that community cats will be returned safely to their outdoor homes.*



**EL PASO  
TNR  
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## READ IN ADVANCE

KEEP THE CAT IN IT'S TRAP DURING THE WHOLE RECOVERY PROCESS.

### \*UPON DROPPING OFF CAT(S)\*

- Staff may give you their own paperwork to fill out.
- You may ask for an estimated pick up time, for your convenience.
- It is normal for them to give you a call when the cat(s) is ready for pick up.
- Please be friendly and cordial with clinic staff.

## 1. PICK UP/ POST-OPERATION

- Take inventory of the cat(s) being picked up for transport.
- Participating veterinarian clinics will give you paperwork when retrieving the cat.
  - Make sure that you have received the **Intake Form** and that it has been filled out by staff.
  - **Keep these forms for your records.**
  - A copy of the **Intake Form** should be given to the corresponding Colony Manager and EPTNR.
- Keep the trap **covered** to reduce the cat's stress.
  - The cat will be groggy and disoriented as it comes out of the anesthesia. It should become more alert and active as the day goes on. The disorientation the cat is feeling can cause it to overreact to normal stimulation and behave in unpredictable ways.
- Keep the recovering cat **away** from other animals and children.
- **Do not** stick your fingers into the trap, or attempt to handle the cat.
- **Never** open the trap doors or allow the cat out of the trap.
  - Make sure the trap doors are locked before loading the cats into the vehicle.
- Gently load and secure the trapped cat(s) in the climate controlled vehicle(s).
- Transport the cat(s) safely back the the designated climate controlled holding area.

# TNR Recap

*You want to protect the cats.*

*Here are the basic steps you must take for every trapping.*

***Volunteers must shadow a qualified trapper two times before trapping on their own.***



**EL PASO  
TNR  
BASICS**

## SAFETY FIRST!

NEVER attempt to pick up a feral cat.

NEVER touch a trapped cat.

NEVER use tranquilizers to trap a cat.

NEVER transport in the back of an open truck.

## ITEMS NEEDED

- Trap(s)
- Towel(s)
- Peepads
- Wet food (the stinkier the better!)
- Spoon, can opener, plastic container (to store extra bait)
- Scotch tape
- Zip ties
- Clothes pins (keep the towel over the trap on windy days)
- Flash light
- Trash bag (to clean up the area of any trash after trapping)
- Shower curtain or tarp to prevent vehicle from getting peed on while transporting.

## CHECKLIST

- 1. Assess the colony**  
Determine how many traps and surgical appointments you will need.
- 2. Coordinate with Colony Managers**  
Know the feeding schedule and designated feeding areas.
- 3. Determine holding area**  
A safe, temperature controlled location to hold the cat(s) before and after surgery.
- 4. Plan your trapping at least a day in advance**  
We recommend trapping the night before surgery. Very early in the morning is possible, but not recommended as food in the system prior to anesthesia is dangerous.
- 5. Request appointment(s) and trap(s)**  
Arrangements will be made to book the surgery(s) and reserve/pick up the trap(s).
- 6. Gather all equipment and practice**  
Make sure you understand how it works ahead of time. It is important to test all the traps, to ensure the trip plate works.
- 7. Withhold food 24 hours before trapping**  
This raises your chances of luring the cat(s) into the trap.

## TRAPPING

- 1. Begin trap preparation away from the trapping site**  
Line the bottom of the trap with two peepads. Do not place peepad up the sides. Tape down.
- 2. Set traps one hour before feeding**  
One hour before the regular feeding schedule, set the traps with partial cover, bait, and watch from afar.
- 3. Traps should NEVER be left unattended**  
Patience is key, this process can be quick or lengthy.
- 4. Once the cat is trapped**  
Approach the trap cautiously, cover the trap completely (this will keep the cat calm). Take pictures of the cat(s) if possible.
- 5. Load traps into vehicle**  
Gently and carefully secure the traps in your vehicle to transfer the cat(s) to the holding area or veterinarian's office.
- 6. Log the required information onto the Intake Form**  
This sheet is required to be taken in with the trapped cat(s)