

# How to humanely trap cats

v2017-06-08



This is a guide on how to humanely trap cats who are too wary of people to be picked up.

By getting just one of these cats desexed, you will be saving the lives of potentially hundreds of cats by:

- preventing births, and more births, and more births
- giving those who are already born a greater chance of finding a home.

The guide includes information on the following.

[Using a standard box trap](#)

[The bottle technique](#) (Using a box trap, but manually triggering it )

[Trap isolator](#)

[Using a drop trap – for the difficult customers!](#)

[Audio gizmo to alert you when someone's at the trap](#)

[Wildlife monitoring camera](#)

['Do not disturb' sign](#)

[Other options when they won't enter trap](#)

# Using a standard box trap

## Things you'll need

1. Trap
2. Newspaper or towel
3. Small paper plate, takeaway container lid or similar
4. Tinned salmon or another type of bait <sup>+</sup>
5. Tin opener
6. Sheet to cover trap
7. Patience
8. (Optional: Fish sauce)
9. (Optional: Emergency Essence or Rescue Remedy)
10. (Optional: Waterproof mattress cover to put under the trap in your car, in case they toilet while in the trap)
11. (Optional: Binoculars)

<sup>+</sup> Salmon is the bait we've had most success with. If your cat lives near a fish and chip shop, try something else:

- warm roast chicken from supermarket
- KFC drumstick (original recipe)
- warm roast beef
- fresh liver
- warm lightly fried bacon

Basically, use anything that's smelly and a novelty for your cat.

## Super, super, super important!!

Some cat viruses can survive on objects for a long time and infect other cats. Feline parvo, aka Panleukopaenia, is highly contagious and very often fatal. If the virus is on your trap, it could kill the cat you are trapping if they have never been vaccinated.

**Before using a trap, always disinfect it.** Wash it with a detergent solution then soak in a 1:32 bleach solution for 30 minutes (eg in your bathtub or laundry sink; one part bleach to 32 parts water). This will kill parvo.

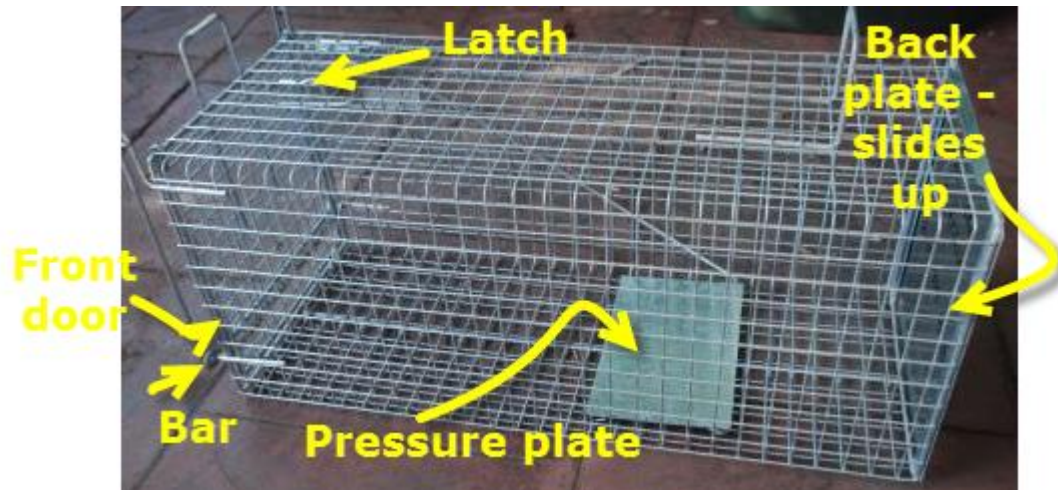
## Trap components

Back metal slide-up panel

Front door

Latch to hold up door (on top)

Pressure plate (inside near back of trap)



## How to trap

**\*\*\* IMPORTANT!!\*\*\***

**NEVER** leave a trap unattended in a public place where someone could access it. They may:

- let the cat out. It will be hard to trap them again
- steal the trap. They may then use it to catch cats and harm them

If you're working in a public place, supervise the trap **at all times**. Try to trap when people aren't around - wait for an hour or so after businesses close if you have to.

Chain the trap to a fixed object if theft is possible.

1. [Disinfect trap](#).
2. Put trap on solid flat surface. Make sure there are no obstructions nearby that will stop front door from closing eg pieces of bark, plants, rocks.

Check that the metal bar slides easily all the way down and front door closes completely.



3. Line trap with newspaper, approx six sheets thick, or towel - cats don't like walking on the wire.





4. If it may be windy while you're trapping, hold down the newspaper with weights (eg small rocks, butter knives), clothes pegs or tape.
5. Slide up back plate.





- Put about 1/4 cup of tinned human-grade salmon (Homebrand is fine) on plastic plate/takeaway container lid.

(Using a lid, rather than a container, means you only have to slide the back plate up a few millimetres to remove the food.

This ensures they can be fasted before their surgery without risk of them getting out.)



- Place food behind the back plate, so the cat has to walk right into the trap, and step on the pressure plate, to get to the food.



- Place trap alongside a solid object (fence, wall), or under a shrub, so the cat feels safer to approach
- Slide back plate down. Make sure it's all the way down - a frightened and panicked cat has amazing strength and could push it up.

10. Drizzle salmon juice along the newspaper and along the ground, making a 'trail' that the cat can follow with their nose.



11. Slide bar on front door up.







12. Slide latch at top of trap forward until it's just over the handle.

Let go of the front door. The latch should hold the door up.

Make sure the latch doesn't slide forward on its own (some traps are a bit dicky).



13. (For when you don't know where the cat is) Put tiny pieces of salmon and salmon juice on high objects - tree trunks and branches, top of fences, building walls. This will help carry the smell if the cat's on another property.

You can also use fish sauce (supermarket) as the smell lure. Put it into a spray bottle, add some water and put the nozzle on 'stream'. Spray high surfaces (tree trunks, fences, buildings) with it, all the way to your trap. It is very smelly and the smell will carry. You will still need a trail



of small pieces of bait leading into the trap.

14. Cover the top and left and right sides of the trap with a sheet.

From outside the trap, put your fingers through the trap and press on the pressure plate.

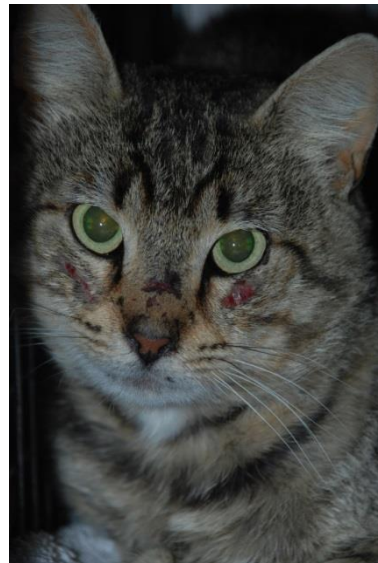
Test that the door closes completely with no obstructions.

(If your cat may be watching you, or within earshot, hold the door while it falls, so that it doesn't make a scary noise).



15. Wait out of sight of the cat. If you have to leave, check on it every hour or so [but **never leave it out of your sight in public**. Stay in your car, parked nearby, with something partly covering your viewing window if need be].

16. When you hear the trap door close, immediately cover the trap completely with the sheet\*. (When they're trapped, they'll panic and will often 'popcorn' in the trap. They can injure their faces, rip out their nails etc. They'll calm down quite quickly once the trap is completely covered).



Samson was left in a council-provided trap overnight, uncovered and unsupervised. He damaged his face from trying to get out.

17. Tie the trap door closed – place something secure above the bar eg removable cable ties (from garden section of hardware store), rope, pipe cleaners, carabiner etc.



18. Wait until they've calmed down before moving them. Keep trap covered at all times.

If they're particularly stressed, drop a few drops of Rescue Remedy or Emergency Essence (from health food store, pharmacy or online) onto the fur on their lower back, through the top of the trap. Avoid their eyes - it will sting.



A couple of drops of homeopathic Aconite solution (30C or 200C) on their forehead between their ears may also calm them.

19. Carry the trap very carefully to your car.

## Do not!!

1. Try to transfer a cat from the trap to a carrier. The cat will almost certainly outwit you and will be much more wary of going into a trap again, if ever.
2. Lift up the front or back door when they're in the trap outside - they can shoot out very quickly.
3. Leave a trap unattended in a public place. People are cruel to cats.
4. Leave the trap unattended for long, even in a private place. The cat will be stressed. Any cat seeing them in the trap will become wary of going into a trap. If you can't stay within eyesight/earshot of the trap, check on it every hour.

If you are trapping late at night and finding it hard to stay awake, we have a [motion-activated audio gizmo](#), which will alert you when an animal walks in front of it.

## The bottle technique

If you need to catch multiple cats in the one trap, or if you only want to trap a particular cat, you can trap manually using the 'bottle technique'.

This is ideal for a Mum and bubs, or a group of bubs, so they aren't separated.

You'll do everything the same as if you were trapping normally, except:

1. Instead of setting the trap [using the latch](#) (Step 12), prop up the door with an empty 1.25L soft drink bottle.
2. Tie a long piece of thin rope around the 'waist' of the bottle. Pull the rope as taut as you can without closing the door.
3. Wait for the particular cats/kittens to go all the way into the trap, including their tail.
4. Pull the rope.
5. Immediately cover the trap completely with a sheet.

### 6. Picking One Out from the Crowd

Sometimes the problem isn't that the particular cat is wily, but that he's the only one you want out of a crowd of others who keep going in ahead of him. If that's the problem, the solution is to bypass the trigger/trip plate mechanism of the trap and go to manual control. Prop the front door of the trap open on top of a full water or soda bottle. Tie a long string around the neck of the bottle then stand some distance away. When your cat of choice finally goes in, yank the string, pulling the bottle away and shutting the door. Be sure to first practice the method at least once so you get the right feel for it, and wait until the cat is far enough in (up to or past the trip plate) before you pull the string.



PHOTO 1: Notice that the string is taut and ready to be pulled. This way it will not distract the cat in the trap as the string is pulled. They can be out and gone before you even get the string straight and taut. Some people tie the string to the bottom of the bottle for less of a visual distraction. (Photo by Urban Cat League)

This video explains it:

[http://www.neighborhoodcats.org/how\\_to\\_hard\\_to\\_catch\\_cats](http://www.neighborhoodcats.org/how_to_hard_to_catch_cats)



## Trap isolator

Trap isolators are indispensable when trapping cats and having them vet worked.

By putting one or preferably two isolators through the wire in the top of the trap, you can divide the trap into two parts, so that either:

- you can safely place food, water and clean bedding into the trap, without the cat getting out
- your vet can sedate them in the trap before anaesthetising them, reducing stress on your cat and safety risks to vet staff.



For small or very determined and frightened cats, having two isolators is preferable. Place them offset to each other through the top of the trap, so that the gap between the prongs is smaller.

Trap isolators are inexpensive and can be purchased [here](#). If they're out of stock, you may need to follow up several times on your order.

Alternatively, you could approach a metal worker to make some for you. They will need to cut, bend and weld metal rod.

## Still can't catch them? Try a drop trap

If you live in Melbourne, Australia, a collapsible drop trap may be available for loan. It is great for catching cats who have become trap shy and won't go into a normal box trap. Cats walk under it, rather than into it.

It's large and heavy. You can be more than 5m from the trap.

To use the drop trap, you need to have:

- about 1.5m square of flat, stable ground for it to sit on
- a clear line of sight to the trap, so you can see when the cat is under it
- a clear path to lay the rope out, so you can pull the rope and trigger the trap
- a box trap to transfer the cat into
- ocky straps to secure the box trap to the drop trap during transfer.

Manouvering them into the box trap requires great care. It can be challenging and time consuming. It's ideal to have two people. You may need a spray bottle of water to encourage them to move. Even this doesn't always work, however, and sometimes you just need to be very patient.

Collapsible drop traps are available for purchase. You can try [ACES](#) (there may be a long delivery time) or [overseas companies](#).

If you're handy, you could [build your own](#). If building your own, make sure that the trap, or weights attached to it, are heavy enough that the cat can not bounce it off the ground and get out. Panicked cats are very strong cats.



## Audible alarm

If you:

- are using the drop trap in the early hours of the morning, when you're tired and may fall asleep while waiting for them
- can't stay in view of the box trap on private property, either because the cat is too wary of you or because of where the trap is
- are trying to trap a particular cat in a box trap, so that you can manually trigger it

the audible alarm may help.

Custom-made on request by Jaycar Electronics, when a cat walks in front of it, it sends an audible alert into an earpiece.

It comes with a long line of cable, so you can be about 7m from the trap.

As long as you're not a very heavy sleeper, the alarm will wake you up when the cat walks in front of the alarm system.

## Wildlife monitoring camera

A good wildlife monitoring camera can be invaluable in finding your missing cat and determining who's doing what, when and where.

Cameras that are silent, have no flash, have a choice of photo or video and have an LCD screen so you can view the footage in the field are helpful.

We use a Scoutguard Zero Glow 8M. We recommend using a 'security box' and cable with it, to prevent theft and interference.

## Good luck!



## Sign for trap

If you're trapping in a place where passers-by might see the trap and be concerned, place the sign on the next page on the trap, so it's visible to people.

Even with the sign on it, if people could access the trap, **you must still stay in eye contact of the trap at all times and be able to reach someone who's approaching it before they grab it or let the cat out.**



# Humane trapping in progress

**This cat is being humanely trapped so that they can receive essential veterinary care.**

**Do not remove trap. Do not remove cat.**

Queries: xxxx xxx xxx

## When they won't enter the trap

### Rinse trap well

After disinfecting the trap, make sure you rinse really thoroughly to reduce the smell of detergent, bleach and/or F10

### Rub trap in dirt

Rub the trap in dirt from the area, to reduce the smell of detergent, bleach or F10

### Spray with Feliway

Spray the newspaper and sheet covering the trap with Feliway. This can be purchased online and at vets.

### Create a tunnel

Remove the back plate and feed for a few days without it, so they can see that they can walk all the way through. Gradually lower it over time until they're entering the trap.

### Use two traps to make one

If you have two traps:

- remove the metal plates and place the traps back to back, with the front doors facing outwards
- secure the traps together eg with ocky strap
- secure both front doors open eg with cable tie, rope, dog lead carabiner
- get them used to this arrangement
- on trapping night, close one front door and set the other trap
- once trapped, carefully insert the metal plate into the trap.

### Use a drop trap

Try a [drop trap](#).

### More tips

This [Facebook page](#) has other suggestions.