

How to humanely trap cats

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This is a guide on how to humanely trap lost cats.

[Using a standard box trap](#)

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

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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⁺
5. Tin opener
6. Sheet to cover trap
7. Patience
8. (Optional: Waterproof mattress cover to put under the trap in your car, in case they toilet while in the trap)

⁺ Salmon is the bait we've had most success with. If your cat lives near a fish and chip shop, this may not be a good bait. You can also try warm roast chicken from supermarket or KFC drumstick (original recipe); warm roast beef; fresh liver; warm lightly fried bacon – 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 F10 veterinary disinfectant (1:125 dilution) or 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.

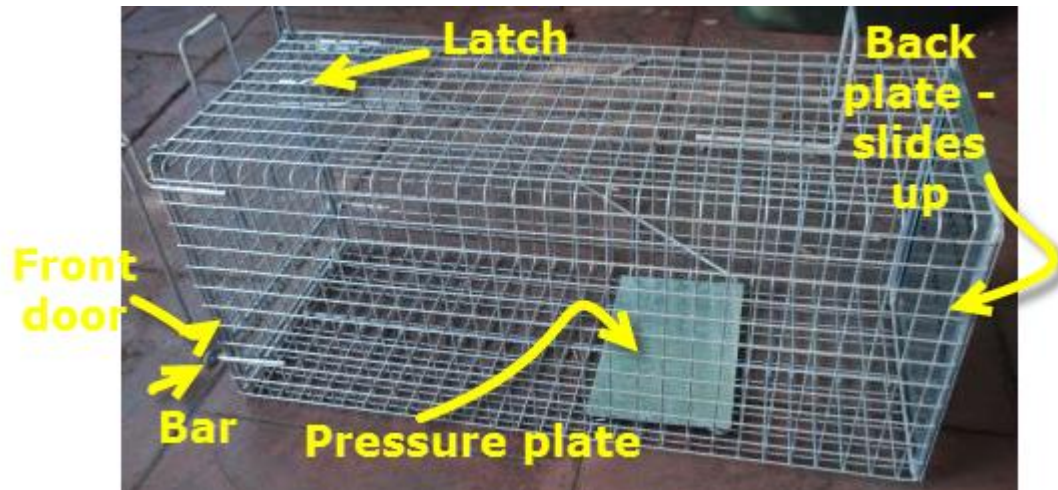
Trap components

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, or take them to a shelter, where they'll be killed

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 bowl or 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.

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.

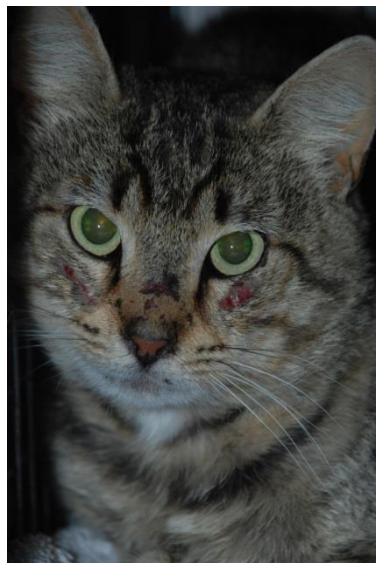
(If your cat may be watching you, or within earshot, hold the door while it falls, so that it doesn't make a scary noise).



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.



Xena was also left in an unmonitored, uncovered trap. She required vet treatment.

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 or pharmacy) onto the fur on their lower back from the top of the trap, avoiding their eyes.



19. Carry the trap very carefully to their next location.

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. Cats have been tortured to death in unattended traps.
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 think you can 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'.

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

1. Instead of setting the trap using the latch (Step 11), prop up the door with an empty 1.25L soft drink bottle, placed at one side of the door.
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 into the trap and be eating at the food end. Make sure their whole body and tail are inside the trap.
4. Pull the rope.
5. Immediately cover the trap completely.

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

Trap isolator

Trap isolators aka trap dividers aka trap rakes are indispensable when trapping cats and having them vet worked.

Benefits

When you put one or preferably two isolators through the side 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, so that the gap between the prongs is smaller.

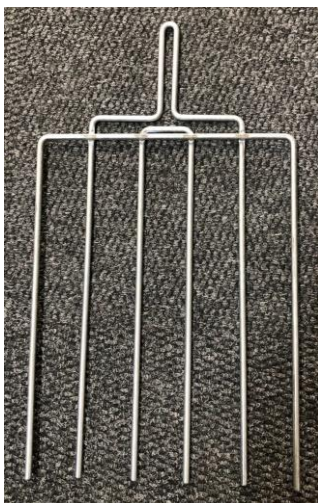
Cost

Trap isolators are inexpensive (about AU\$33 in 2022).

Suppliers

In Australia, Wiretainers/BJ Turner and [Australian Care and Equipment Services \(ACES\)](#) sell them. Wiretainers calls them '[trap rakes](#)' (see bottom of page).

Wiretainers/BJ Turner make their equipment on site. ACES' equipment comes from America; and there can be long delivery delays if the item isn't in stock.



Wiretainers/BJ Turner 'trap rake

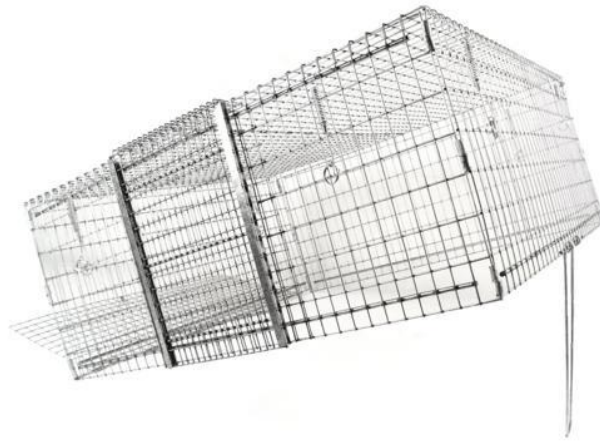


ACES trap isolator

Crush cage

An alternative to an isolator is to use a ['crush cage'](#). This enables the vet to move the cat to one end of the trap, for easy sedation.

Still can't catch them? Try a drop trap



A commercial [collapsible drop trap](#) is available. Cats walk under it, rather than into it, so it can be good for catching trap-wary cats.

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.

Manouvering them into the box trap can be challenging and time consuming. It's ideal to have two people.

The drop trap is great for catching cats who have become trap shy and won't go into a normal box trap.

[Read instructions on using commercial drop trap.](#)

[Watch video on setting up and collapsing commercial drop trap.](#)

[Watch video of commercial drop trap in action, including how to trap in awkward situations.](#)

You can make one yourself if you can't buy the commercial one. Check out the [drop trap design bank](#). Unless you have a ute or a truck, we highly recommend you build one that is collapsible.

Audio gizmo

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

We have had Jaycar Electronics make up a motion-activated 'audio gizmo'.

When a cat walks in front of it, it sends an audible alert into an earpiece.

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

Wildlife monitoring camera

A good wildlife monitoring camera can be invaluable in determining who's doing what, when and where, making it easier to trap.

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.

[Learn more about choosing and using them.](#)

Good luck and thanks for helping cats!



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