

FERAL... OR STRAY?

Feral is not another word for "stray." A stray is a cat who has been abandoned or who has strayed from home and become lost. Stray cats can usually be re-socialized and adopted. Adult feral cats usually can't be socialized and won't adjust to living indoors or with a human family.

Feral cats are cats that have generally had little or no human contact, causing them to develop a natural fear of humans. Extreme caution must be used when handling feral cats. Not all homeless cats are

feral; some may be strays who are lost or have been recently abandoned by humans. The only difference between a housecat and a feral is that feral cats have a strong fear of humans. They usually live in colonies near any food source that they can find: In neighborhoods, alleyways, apartment complexes, behind restaurants, on college/hospital campuses, and many other places.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- ❖ All feral cats must be in a humane trap to be accepted for surgery. Drop-off for feral cats is Monday – Wednesday from 9:00am to 4:00pm.
- ❖ All feral cats will be given an eartip, approved by the American Veterinary Medical Association as the universal sign a cat has been spayed or neutered.
- ❖ All cats over 3 months of age that are accepted for surgery are vaccinated for rabies.
- ❖ Dissolvable sutures eliminate need for a follow-up visit to remove stitches.
- ❖ Feral cats will receive surgery within 24 hours of drop-off, unless scheduled.



POST SURGERY AFTERCARE INSTRUCTIONS

HOLD CATS AFTER SURGERY

Leave the cats in the traps or carriers in which they were placed after surgery. Do not try to move them to a larger cage. **Keep the doors locked at all times unless performing one of the emergency or caregiving tasks that follow.**

MONITOR AND KEEP WARM

Monitor the cats for bleeding, infection, illness, and appetite. Do not release the cats that night! Leave them in the trap. After surgery, both male and female cats **must be kept indoors overnight** in a warm, draft-free area such as a bathroom, spare bedroom, basement, or climate-controlled garage. Cats cannot regulate their body temperature while under anesthesia, so you must ensure that they don't get too cold or too hot. If at all possible, they should be kept in a room heated to about 70 degrees. The cats should not be placed on a cold or damp floor, which will induce chilling. Place them on blankets or layers of towels, with a space heater nearby or a heating pad on low placed underneath or on top of the cages. Be careful that the heaters are not too close because they can overheat or burn the cats, even on a low setting. CAUTION: Space heaters are fire hazards and should be monitored when in use.

SAFETY FIRST

Keep the traps/carriers covered with a sheet or blanket. **Do not stick your fingers through the bars of the traps or otherwise attempt to touch or handle the cats.** Feral cats even when anesthetized may react to strange people, noises, and activity, and you or the cat could be injured. Even if the cats appear unconscious, they may still get out of the trap if you open the door.

CHECK HOURLY

Look in on the cats every hour to check their progress. The cats will be groggy as they recover from anesthesia. **The anesthesia may have hallucinogenic effects** and cause the cats to overreact to normal stimulation or to become aggressive. The anesthesia will wear off after about 4 to 24 hours. There should be no signs of bleeding.

EMERGENCIES

If a cat is bleeding, vomiting, having difficulty breathing, or not waking up after many hours, call the nearest veterinary emergency hospital. If a cat is vomiting, his/her head should be turned so that liquid can come out. This may be achieved by tipping the trap somewhat so that the cat's position shifts.

CAUTION: only open the trap door or handle the cat in the event of extreme emergency and only if you are confident that you will not be injured in so doing. If you must open the door, do so in an enclosed room and wear thick gloves to decrease possible injury. Do not place the cat back in vomit.

FEEDING

Immediately after surgery, only feed kittens that are four months old or younger. **Do not feed adult cats until at least eight hours after surgery.** A small amount of canned food can be placed on a plastic lid with a little water around it. The cats may not have an appetite or may be too scared to eat. When feeding the cats, lift the back door of the trap very slowly so that only a small gap is open. Slide the lid into the trap quickly without putting your hand inside and always keep an eye on the cat. If the cat moves toward the opening, close the door immediately to avoid letting the cat out. Always relock the trap door.

CHANGING TRAP PAPER

You may need to remove urine-soaked newspapers from the trap and replace them with fresh newspaper. As explained above, use extreme caution if opening the door of the trap. **Only raise the door a crack** to pull out soiled newspaper. If you are unable to slide fresh paper into the trap, **DO NOT reach inside or lift the door further.** Instead, place the trap on top of the folded newspaper so that the paper underneath the trap can absorb any waste.

WHEN TO RETURN

The morning after you get them home, check to see that the cats are alert, clear-eyed, and not displaying any signs of illness. If they appear healthy, they may be returned to where they were trapped 24 hours after surgery (barring inclement weather or extreme outdoor temperatures). **If a female was pregnant and needs more time to recover, she may be held for an additional 24 to 48 hours.**

RETURN

Return the cats to the site where they were trapped. Provide fresh water and food. The cats may disappear for a few hours or days, but will return after they have calmed down.

EXTRA CARE

If you must keep the cats longer than one night, continue to provide food along with water. Moist food is preferable because it is more easily digested. Feed small amounts of food at first.

Emergency Numbers: Contact the spay/neuter clinic at 706-424-7478 to report any emergency situations and seek medical assistance from the nearest veterinary emergency hospital.