

Chapter 4: How to care for the Community Cats?

The decision to volunteer one's time and resources to effectively and efficiently manage and care for the stray cats in Auckland is enormous. The responsibility could either be the daily management and care of established stray cat colonies and/or assisting members of the community to trap and desex stray cats. In both scenarios,

- Dedicated efforts are made to foster and/or rehome all well-socialised stray cats/kittens.
- All stray cats are to be trapped, health checked, desexed, ear-tipped and microchipped before being returned to their home environment
- Humane euthanasia to be performed for any stray cats with severe injuries or health conditions.

4.1. How to assess & care for cat colonies?

Ongoing colony management, combined with a TNR programme, will promote harmony between cat colony carers, neighbours, and property owners and allow for the colony to diminish naturally over time.

How does one ensure that the physical, health, and behavioural needs of stray cats in colonies are met?

Physical health and Behavioural Needs are defined in Section 4 of the Animal Welfare Act:
Proper and sufficient food and water

- Adequate shelter
- Opportunity to display normal patterns of behaviour
- Physical handling in a manner which minimises the likelihood of unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress
- Protection from, and rapid diagnosis of, any significant injury or disease, as appropriate to their species, age and stage of development.

Refer to the following page for a summary of the elements to consider when assessing one's colony, caring for all of the cats and the key indicators to be recorded. The detailed **Standard Care and Management of Cat Colonies Protocol** is contained in Annexure I.



COLONY MANAGEMENT

A. Assessment	B. Caring		Foster & rehome kittens and/or socialised cats
Location <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site & personal safety • Escape/shelter • Community attitude • Impact on wildlife 	Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permission from landowner • Community engagement 		
Nr in colony <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Gender • Desexed status 	Humane Trapping (as per protocol) Veterinary intervention <p>Vaccinate, flea treatment, desex, ear tip & microchip OR Euthanasia on humane grounds due to severe illness/injury</p>		
Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body condition • Coat condition • Nasal/ocular discharge • Ear crusting • Injury 	Food & Water <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refresh food and water daily at the same time and place (minimum requirement) • Feeding stations to be kept neat and clean 		
	Shelter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waterproof shelters for security and safety • Clearly identified as colony cats outdoor home 		

C. Colony Cat Records

Maintain records for each colony and each of the cats within the said colony

- Name, Colour, Gender, approximate age
- Desexed status, ear tipped (Y/N) and microchip details
- Veterinary interventions (desex, treat, euthanase) with dates
- Report number of kittens rehomed/adopted
- Report number of cats found dead or missing
- Report number of newcomers and ensure that this cat is managed as part of the colony

TIP: Useful to give names with descriptions for each cat

$$S \text{ (nr of cats)} + N \text{ (newcomers)} - K \text{ (kittens rehomed)} - E \text{ (euthanasia)} - D \text{ (death)} - M \text{ (missing)} = \text{SIZE of COLONY}$$



4.2. How to humanely trap, transport and return cats?

It is recommended that you learn best practice tools and techniques to effectively and safely **Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)** of Community Cats. **The Cat Trapping “how to” protocol** (Annexure I) sets out the 7 key steps of the TNR as well as providing a few Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ’s) and the **Trap components** are attached in Annexure J

The following sub-sections provides a summary of the 7 steps of TNR:

4.2.1. Preparing the trap

It is very important to be fully prepared prior to **every trapping session**. This includes carrying your CCC Identification card, having a charged mobile, wearing the appropriate clothing, pre-tested well-functioning trap and all the relevant trapping equipment.

To provide a more comfortable surface for the cats to walk on when entering the trap, **line the bottom of the trap with newspaper (folded lengthwise)**. Be sure the trap lining doesn’t prevent the trap door from closing and locking. **Cover the trap with the custom-made waterproof trap cover.**

4.2.2. Setting the trap

The best time to trap a cat is at **dusk**, by placing a trap, where it is **camouflaged** (i.e. near a bush, tree or where they normally eat), on **dry and stable ground**.

Lift the **front and back covers** of the cat cover, insert them under the steel handles of the trap so that you can **comfortably bait and set the trap**.

Remove the Perspex door and **bait the trap** by placing approximately one – two teaspoons of bait (cat food, tuna, sardines, mackerel, or other strong smelling food—usually the ones in oil work best) in the small plastic or disposable food dish or small flat piece of cardboard behind the trap metal plate and back of trap. Insert the D cup with water and replace the Perspex door, ensuring that the food dish is not too large or too close to the trap metal plate.

To set a trap one needs to lift the trap steel door. While holding the trap door with one hand, grasp the metal rod with your other hand. Pull the rod horizontally until the tip of the metal rod is resting under the lifted trap door. This action causes the trip plate to lift. Please *note that the tip of the metal rod should not protrude more than a couple of couple of millimetres at most, or the trap door will not always drop down when cat steps on the plate.* Refer to the **trap troubleshooting** in section 9 of Annexure I if the trap is not working correctly.

To make entering the trap more enticing, you can either place a teaspoon of food just inside the entrance on top of the newspaper and/or drizzle some juice from the bait in a zigzag pattern along the newspaper toward the entrance and just outside the entrance of the trap.



Ensure that the **side flaps** of the trap cover are down, but the front and back flaps are still secured under the trap handles. Now leave the area quietly, however, remain within hearing or visual range, but out of sight.

4.2.3. Checking the trap

As soon as a cat has entered into the trap and stepped onto the trap plate, the steel trap door will shut automatically. Move steadily and quietly towards the trap and promptly **cover the entire trap** with the waterproof cat cover (or with a large towel or sheet) to help keep the cats calm.

Move trapped cats away to a quiet, safe area to avoid scaring any remaining, un-trapped cats and to effectively assess whether you have trapped the target cat, but never open the trap to try and touch a cat.

Healthy collared and/or ear-tipped cats can be released immediately, however, all other cats to be transported to your home or Vet clinic. .

The Coalition has developed a cat tracking system which is an integral part of our management process. This will allow us to keep track of our colony cats, maintain efficient records, and develop sound statistical information. (See Chapter 8, and Annexure K).

The **Community Cat Tracking form** (refer to Annexure K) needs to be completed for all cats to be transported to the Vet clinic. **EACH CAT** from the site will be allocated a **CAT ID**, which is your initials followed by 3 numerical digits in ascending order from 001 – 900.

4.2.4. Transporting

It is important to use the **correct manual handling technique** to **lift and load the trap** into your vehicle to reduce the likelihood of injuries to one 'self. Refer to this in section 5 of Annexure N.

Place the traps on the seat or in the back of a **well-ventilated vehicle** on top of the plastic boot liner tray or waterproof plastic drop sheet which will protect your car's upholstery from urination.

Never place traps on top of one another and be sure to secure the traps with **bungee cords** or other restraints if necessary. If an unsecured trap tips sideways or upside down, it can open and release the cat. Don't take the risk.

Be extremely careful when loading and unloading traps, as trap doors can easily get caught on each other and accidentally open.

Dependent on the health status, the time of the day and veterinary availability the cat will either be transported to your home or to the Vet clinic.



If one needs to keep the cat overnight, it is best practice to keep the trap fully covered and to place the trap in a safe and quiet place with good ventilation. It is also recommended to place the trap in an elevated position (i.e. on a couple of bricks or something similar) so that when the cat urinates, the urine will drip through onto the plastic underneath the trap.

4.2.5. Veterinary intervention

All eligible community cats will receive relevant medical treatment (if necessary), be desexed using dissolvable sutures, ear-tipped, microchipped and receive flea treatment while under anaesthetic. This information will be updated on section C of the **Community Cat Tracking card** (Annexure K) by the vet.

Post-surgery recovery times will vary. Actively lactating females, healthy male neuters and spays could be returned on the same day, however, heavily pregnant spays should be held for 24 hours.

4.2.6. Returning cats

Sociable or sick kittens and cats will be placed into foster care, while the remaining strays will be returned to their original habitat during the late afternoon/early evening where their presence is approved and arrangements made for their ongoing care.

Once at the site, **scan the area** to ensure that there are no **potential hazards** for yourself or the cat you are about to return to original habitat. Quietly remove the trap from the vehicle and place the trap down carefully on dry and even ground.

To release the cat back to its original location, place the trap near an area with bush or some form of hiding place for the cat to run under when released, as cats should not be released in open spaces as many cats tend to race off and some panic and could run onto a busy road. Face the **back of the trap** towards the safe and secure area you would like the cats to move towards. Lift the back trap cover up and pull away the cover to partially expose the cat in the trap. **Lift up and remove the back Perspex door and walk away.** Do not be concerned if the cat hesitates a few moments before leaving; the cat is simply re-orientating him/herself to the surroundings.

Update Section E of your Community Cat Tracking form as well as your Master spreadsheet.

4.2.7. Cleaning the trap

Every trap set and retrieved from the site (used or unused) needs to be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before being stored or reused. Wearing disposable gloves, mask and apron and after removing all the loose items, use a solution of one part bleach to 10 parts water to scrub off all the surfaces. Allow the bleach solution to remain on the trap for 10 minutes before being rinsed off with water.

