

TNR is so easy even dog people can do it!

BY CAROL CARIDAD

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Most people think of their own experience in catching their pet cat — chasing them around the house and finally extracting them from beneath the bed for that trip to the vet

— and shutter at the thought of trying to catch a wild animal. But, contrary to popular belief, trapping stray and feral (untamed) cats is a walk in the park.

“It’s estimated there are over 400,000 free roaming cats in Miami-Dade alone,” says Sylvia Mora, president of The Cat Network, Inc. “And many of those cats are contributing the tragic overpopulation problem in our county.”

Just around every corner we see their faces, hiding in bushes, scavenging dumpsters, and frequently they are hit by cars. Many people (possibly even yourself) think they are making a positive difference by simply feeding these free roaming cats, but keeping their tummies full does not prevent the vicious cycle of overpopulation from occurring. Mora says she speaks to many people who are frustrated because of the amount of money they are spending to feed a growing population of stray cats in their neighborhoods.

“We get calls everyday from people who say they went from feeding one cat to feeding 15 in just a few months,” Mora says. “But when I ask if they attempted to sterilize the first cat, the answer is usually no. The reality is that it is cheaper to pay to have one cat fixed than to pay to feed a growing population of cats over their lifetime.”

Obviously if you tried to catch a feral cat the wrong way, it would not hesitate to bite and scratch based on its pure instinct for survival. But what people don’t know is how incredibly easy and safe it is to catch a feral cat if you use the right tool — a cat trap! Combine a hungry wild animal with infamous feline curiosity and you’ve got yourself an easily-tricked kitty who will walk straight into your trap.

In order to trap a cat the right way, you will need:

- A humane wildlife trap (cat trap). You can rent a trap from Miami Dade Animal Services or The Cat Network, who both charge a refundable deposit, or invest in your own humane cat trap.
- A large towel or blanket.

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- Bait (cooked chicken, fish or turkey).

Ok, so you’ve got the stuff. Now what? Follow these nine steps:

- Get to know the routine of the cat you are looking to trap. Many feral cats hunt at night, so the best time to trap is after sundown. Plus, there’s less traffic and noise.

- Bait and set your trap on the ground (flat surface) in an area where the cat is likely to find it, but away from things that may endanger or frighten the cat.

- Wait.

- Check your trap before bedtime.

- If you’ve trapped your cat, immediately throw the towel or blanket over the trap. This dramatically calms the cat, who may start thrashing and hissing as you approach.

- Keep your cat covered inside the trap and place the trap and cat in a safe area until you are able to take the cat to be sterilized.

- Don’t worry about the veterinarians and their technicians, they know how to handle feral cats.

- After getting your cat back from the vet, keep the cat inside the trap for another 24 hours so it can recovery fully from the anesthesia.

- The next evening, release your cat in the same location that you trapped it. This is import to the cat’s survival.

And there’s even better news than how incredibly easy it is to participate in TNR (trap, neuter, release). Just last month Miami Dade Animal Services began offering free spay and neuter services for cats every Thursday. Check in begins at 8 a.m. on a first come first served basis. Now there’s just no excuse.

“Trapping using a humane trap is safe, easy and the most effective way to sterilize stray and feral cats you can’t handle. Sterilization prevents the vicious cycle of unwanted cats being born that will continue if a cat is left unsterilized,” says Sylvia.

So, my new philosophy about TNR is this: It’s so easy, even dog people can do it!

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