



St Louis Feral Cat Outreach
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Post-Surgery Recovery Instructions for Feral Cats

Please see as follows for a list of post-surgery recovery instructions:

1. Prior to leaving the veterinary clinic, please peek inside each trap to verify all of the cats have been ear-tipped and that all of the traps are locked securely. Please verify that the paperwork you receive matches the cats you are leaving with.
2. You will monitor the cats for 24 hours post-surgery – it is vital that you do not return the cats outdoors right away.
 - a. Monitor the cats for the following: excessive bleeding, infection, illness and appetite overnight.
 - b. In event of emergency, please contact the volunteer you are working with or leave a message at 314-669-5228.
3. Each cat should remain in their same trap and the trap should be covered at all times, aside from gently lifting the trap cover to do trap care. Keeping traps covered reduces stress and potential injury.
 - a. Always keep the trap doors secured unless performing caregiving tasks.
4. After surgery, all cats **must** be kept indoors overnight in a warm, temperature regulated, draft-free area such as a bathroom, spare bedroom, basement or climate-controlled garage. Cats cannot regulate their body temperature until the anesthesia has been completely processed out of their body so the cats **must** be kept warm for 24 hours post-surgery.
5. Carefully place newspapers or towels under the traps to absorb urine & feces.
6. **Never** open the trap doors or allow the cat out of the trap. **Never** stick any part of your body through the bars of the trap. **Never** attempt to handle the cat, even if the cat seems friendly. These guidelines are for your safety and the cat's safety.
7. If the cat is not already moving around in the trap post-surgery, monitor the cat and check back often to ensure the cat is breathing normally. If the cat is covered up (some clinics wrap the kitties to help them stay warm), watch for the cover to move up and down to be sure they are breathing. Once fully recovered, the cat will shimmy out of the wrap.
8. Over the next 24 hours, continue to monitor the cat for excessive bleeding from the surgical site or ear tip. Some blood may be present on the newspapers/blanket in the trap and while that is normal, you should never see blood puddling or pooling.
9. All skin sutures (when used) are absorbable and will not need to be removed post-surgery. Skin glue has the same effect.
10. In certain rare circumstances, when a cat is not recovering well from the anesthesia, he/she may benefit from a bottle of warm water or heated up bag of dry rice/beans placed in the trap against their body. Use extreme caution if you feel this is necessary. This should be done with an isolator/divider. Another option is to use a warm heating pad underneath the trap. Leaving space for the cat to move away from the heat once they are warm enough.

Providing nourishment post-surgery:

- A. For the initial post-surgery feeding, use 2 or 3 tablespoons of wet food per cat and mix in water to make a slurry.
 - a. Cats should not get a separate water dish.
 - b. Kittens 5 months old and younger can be offered food 4 hours after surgery and adult cats & cats older than 6 months old can be offered food 8 hours after surgery.
- B. Use of an isolator is preferred when placing food in the traps. This is a fork-like device that slides through the mesh of the trap to “isolate” the cat to one side while you open the door on the other side. If you do not have this tool, use a shallow dish and open the trap only enough to slide the dish in. If the cat makes any move toward the opening close the door immediately. Doing this on the “spring” end of the trap allows the trap to close automatically if you must pull your hand away.
- C. Later that night, if the cats have consumed the initial offering, more food can be given and water offered.
- D. Trapped cats will often refuse food and may not pass urine or feces. Do not be alarmed if this is the case.

Returning the cats:

24 hours post-surgery, the cats can be returned. Check that the cats are alert, clear-eyed and not displaying any signs of illness. If a female cat had a “complicated spay” and/or if it is raining, we often hold that specific cat an extra day. But not at the expense of undo stress for the cat. You may contact St Louis Feral Cat Outreach with any further questions.