

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) Guidelines

The Humane Society of Charlotte loans out traps for the Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) of community cats.

Traps may be borrowed for scheduled appointments, and all TNR surgeries must be booked in advance.

 [Make a TNR Appointment Online](#)

If you've trapped a cat but don't have an appointment, please email spayneuter@humanecharlotte.org to see if we can fit you in.

Preparation for Trapping

- Withhold food for **24 hours before trapping** so cats are hungry enough to enter the trap.
- Trap the night before or early morning of surgery day. Cats should not eat after midnight before surgery.
- Prepare a safe, sheltered, temperature-controlled holding space (garage, shed, etc.) lined with newspaper or absorbent material.
- Plan carefully: once released, cats are very difficult to trap again.
- Kittens must be at least **8–10 weeks old** for surgery. If you find a nursing mother, ensure kittens are old enough to eat on their own before trapping her.

Setting the Traps

- **Timing matters.** Set traps right before or at the cats' normal feeding time when they are most likely to be looking for food. Avoid trapping in rain or extreme heat without proper cover and shade.
- **Location is key.** Place traps where cats already feel comfortable — along a fence line, near feeding stations, or in areas you regularly see them. Avoid wide open areas where they may feel exposed.
- **Keep traps stable.** Cats will not enter a trap that wobbles or shifts. Place traps on flat, solid ground. If needed, use a small board or bricks to steady them.

- **Camouflage helps.** Cover the trap with a light sheet, towel, or burlap, leaving the entrance clear. This makes the trap feel less threatening and helps keep the cat calm once inside.
- **Prepare the trap.** Line the floor with a single layer of newspaper or cardboard to make walking inside more comfortable. Do not over-pad, as this may interfere with the mechanism.
- **Use the right bait.** Smelly food works best — tuna, sardines, or wet cat food placed behind the trip plate. Drizzle a small food trail leading inside to encourage the cat to walk all the way in.
- **Set the door.** Open the trap door and secure it properly with the trigger mechanism so it will close once the cat steps on the plate. Always double-check that it is set correctly before leaving it unattended.
- **Check traps frequently.** Never leave traps unattended for long periods. Cats can injure themselves if left inside too long, and trapped cats are vulnerable to the weather and other animals.



The Waiting Game

- As soon as a cat is trapped, **cover the trap** to help calm the animal.
- Move the cat to a quiet space and confirm it is not already ear-tipped (spayed/neutered).
- If you catch the wrong animal, stand behind the trap, lift the rear door, and release safely.

Holding Procedure

- Keep cats in their traps in a safe, enclosed location until their scheduled appointment.
- Do not put your hands inside the trap. If bitten or scratched, contact **Animal Care & Control (311)**.

Surgery Day

- All TNR surgeries require a confirmed appointment.
- Each cat must arrive in its **own trap** (maximum 2 cats per person per appointment).
- Drop-off and pick-up instructions will be provided when you book your appointment.
- Post-surgery care details will be given when you retrieve the cat.

Releasing the Cat

- Always release cats in the **same location** where they were trapped. Relocation can be dangerous.
- Point the trap away from streets or hazards. Keep it covered until you're ready to release.
- Open the rear door and allow the cat to leave on its own.



Returning Traps

Return traps to the Humane Society of Charlotte by the due date to avoid late fees.