

TNR & COLONY CARE

TNR Caretaker Starter Kit: Checklists and Colony Log

Print it before your first trapping day: a planning checklist, a trapping-day checklist, an after-surgery checklist and a colony log to track every cat.

By Catt County Cat Nippers • Reviewed October 15, 2026 • 2 min read • 4 cited sources

Need help with spay/neuter costs in Cattaraugus County? Apply at cattcountycatnippers.org/apply or call or text (716) 200-1283. Support this work at cattcountycatnippers.org.

How to use this kit

Print the PDF, keep it with your traps, and fill in the colony log as you go. Each step is explained in our [TNR guide](#); if you are working through the winter, see [winter care for outdoor cats](#).

Caring for cats in Cattaraugus County and need help with surgery costs or traps? [Apply here](#).

Planning checklist: the week before

- ☐ Get to know the neighborhood: find out who else feeds the cats, and get permission from property owners where you need access.
- ☐ Count the colony and describe each cat in the log: coat, size, and any that are pregnant, nursing, injured or very young.
- ☐ Feed on a schedule: the same time and place every day. Pick up leftovers.
- ☐ Book surgery appointments before you trap, or [apply to us](#) for help with the cost.
- ☐ Line up humane box traps, one per cat, and a sheet or towel to cover each one.
- ☐ Ready a warm, dry, secure holding space, away from fumes, other animals and people. Neighborhood Cats suggests at least 65°F; Alley Cat Allies, around 70°F.
- ☐ Arrange transport where traps sit flat and secured. Never in a trunk or an open truck bed.
- ☐ Check the forecast. If it is too hot or too cold for you, it is too hot or too cold for a cat in a trap.

Trapping-day checklist

- ☐ Food withheld for about 24 hours, never more than 48. Never withhold water.
- ☐ Each trap lined with newspaper folded lengthwise (taped down if windy).
- ☐ Each trap tagged with where it was set.
- ☐ Bait: about a tablespoon of strong-smelling food at the back, with a little juice drizzled toward the entrance.
- ☐ Traps on flat, stable ground in quiet spots; several traps staggered and facing different ways.
- ☐ You can see the traps; the cats cannot see you. Never leave a trap unattended.
- ☐ Cat caught: cover the trap at once and move it to the holding space.
- ☐ Never open the trap or try to handle the cat.
- ☐ Cat's description added to the trap tag and the colony log.
- ☐ Traps counted before you leave, so none is left behind.

After surgery

- ☐ Each cat kept covered in its trap in the holding space while it recovers. Follow the clinic's instructions on how long.
- ☐ A cat that is very lethargic or vomiting: do not open the trap; call the veterinarian.
- ☐ Each cat returned to the exact spot where it was trapped.
- ☐ Feeding continues on the usual schedule.
- ☐ Watch for newcomers: a cat without an ear-tip has not been through TNR yet.

Colony log

One row per cat. Ear-tipped cats have already been through TNR: note them, but do not trap them again.

COLONY LOG

Cat description	Sex (if known)	Ear-tipped (Y/N)	Date trapped	Clinic	Date returned	Notes

Sources

1. Neighborhood Cats — The 7 Steps of TNR

<https://www.neighborhoodcats.org/how-to-tnr/getting-started/the-7-steps-of-tnr>

2. Alley Cat Allies — How to Catch a Feral or Stray Cat with a Trap

<https://www.alleycat.org/community-cat-care/steps-for-a-successful-trapping-day/>

3. Alley Cat Allies — Keep Community Cats Comfortable While in Their Trap

<https://www.alleycat.org/community-cat-care/keep-community-cats-comfortable-while-in-their-trap/>

4. Alley Cat Allies — Tips for Hard-To-Trap Cats

<https://www.alleycat.org/tips-for-hard-to-trap-cats/>