



Caring for Trap-Neuter-Release Cats After Surgery

Note: The instructions given for “Cats in Traps During Immediate Postoperative Recovery Period” presume that the reader has attended Neighborhood Cats’, “Trap-Neuter-Return: How to Manage a Feral Cat Colony.”

Thank you for spaying/neutering a feral cat. You have just helped to decrease the population of free-roaming cats in your neighborhood! Although spays and neuters are common procedures, please remember that each cat has just gone through surgery and needs appropriate care to properly recover, including a clean, warm, and dry place indoors to rest.

Note: The postoperative care line can be reached at (844) MY-ASPCA, (844) 692-7722. If you have any questions or concerns after your pet has had surgery, call this number and choose the option that allows you to speak to a Client Services Representative. **Prior to seeking any veterinary care for a cat with a postoperative complication, you must contact the postoperative care line, which is available 24 hours a day/7 days a week.** Please be advised that if an animal’s illness or injury is not related to the surgery, the ASPCA will not be responsible for costs associated with care. In addition, if postoperative instructions were not followed, the cost of the re-check appointment and care may not be covered by the ASPCA.

Anesthesia and Surgery

Monitor your pet for any signs of abnormal recovery from anesthesia and/or surgery. These may include, bleeding, lethargy or weakness, loss of appetite/decreased water intake, shivering, unsteady gait that persist beyond 24 hours after surgery.

Call the post-operative care line immediately if your pet experiences vomiting, diarrhea, labored breathing or has pale gums.

Vaccinations

If the cat received vaccinations, monitor the site of vaccination (shoulder/hind leg) and check for signs that your cat is having a reaction to the vaccine. These include, swelling of face, hives, limping, drooling, itchiness or pain or swelling at the vaccine site (shoulder/hind leg). If any of these signs occur, call the postoperative care line.

Pain Medication

The cat was given long-acting pain medication in conjunction with spay/neuter surgery. **DO NOT GIVE HUMAN MEDICATION TO THE CAT.** It is dangerous and can be fatal.

Surgery Site

There are no stitches on the outside of the surgery site. All stitches are underneath the skin. These stitches dissolve, so there is no need to return to the Spay/Neuter Clinic or seek any additional medical assistance for suture removal. The two sides of the incision are also adhered with medical grade glue.

The surgery site on a male cat is so small that it does not need to be closed with stitches or medical grade glue. It is acceptable to see one or two small openings on the scrotum.

If the cat easily allows, check the surgery site daily to make sure that it is healing. If the surgery site is very red, has green/yellow or reddish discharge, has a bad odor, has something sticking out from it, is warm to the touch or has bruising or a bump that seems to be growing, contact the postoperative care line.

Do not apply any products to the surgery site unless recommended by the staff members of the ASPCA Spay/Neuter Clinic.

Bathroom Habits

Contact the postoperative care line if the cat is not regularly urinating or is straining to urinate within 72 hours after spay/neuter surgery. Monitor the cat’s urine for blood. A small amount may be present in female animals during the first 24 hours after surgery. If this continues, call the postoperative care line.



Tattoo

Cats receive a small green tattoo on the lower part of their abdomen. No complications from the tattoo are expected, however, monitor the tattoo site for redness, swelling, or discharge. If these occur, please contact the postoperative care line.

For Cats in Traps

Cleaning the Trap, Providing Food, and Water

Following the instructions provided by Neighborhood Cats' Workshop, "Trap-Neuter-Return: How to Manage a Feral Cat Colony," clean the trap and provide food/water twice daily, always using two trap dividers to do this.

Occasionally cats will not eat well while trapped. If lethargy, vomiting, diarrhea, or other signs are not present, the cat will likely resume his/her eating habits once released.

Bathroom Habits

Trapped cats may not urinate/defecate as they normally would, especially if they are eating and drinking very little. This is generally related to the stress of trapping/surgery and cats will return to their normal habits after being released. If you notice that the cat is straining to urinate, vocalizing while urinating or defecating, has bloody urine, or abdominal enlargement, contact the postoperative care line immediately.

Restrict Activity

To help keep the cat from being too active:

- Place a sheet over the entire trap so that the cat will have a dark place to rest.
- Keep the holding facility dark and quiet

Surgery Site

Check the surgery site daily to make sure that there are no abnormalities:

- With use of a trap divider, remove papers from the bottom of the trap and (with two people) raise the trap so that you can easily view the cat's surgical site. Be careful that the cat cannot scratch you.
- Avoid causing the cat stress. If he/she is highly stressed, stop and try again later.
- If the cat has been ear tipped and the site of the ear tip is bleeding, contact the postoperative care line.

Correct Time Spans to Hold Cats in Traps After Surgery

Holding times presume cats are kept in 36" traps in a temperate, quiet, secure location, and are kept appropriately covered.

A lactating female cat may be returned to the site of trapping 24 hours after surgery, as long as her incision site appears normal and she is adequately recovered from anesthesia.

The following holding times are offered as guidelines only:

- Healthy male cats: 24-48 hours following surgery
- Healthy female cats: 48-72 hours following surgery

Confinement may be extremely stressful for free-roaming cats. If, after the incision site appears normal and the cat has adequately recovered from anesthesia, the cat shows any signs of stress—repeated attempts to escape the trap or not eating—the cat should be released. If the cat has a medical problem that was identified at the time of spay/neuter surgery, postoperative holding times and conditions may be altered by the ASPCA Spay/Neuter Clinic staff.

Release of Cat

The cat should be released at the site of his/her trapping as relocation of cats is extremely difficult to accomplish successfully. If the cat absolutely needs to be relocated, consult a feral cat advocacy group in your community for recommendations.