

Feral Cat Post-op Instructions

Post-operative care for feral cats depends on whether you can handle the cat. If you can handle the cat, please follow the standard care described on our “Post-Operative Instructions.” **If the cat is truly feral, do not attempt to handle him or her.** You risk serious injury to yourself and/or to the cat if you attempt to handle a feral cat. It is not cruel to leave a feral cat in their trap – even for a few days if needed. Feral cats don’t react like a tame cat. They tend to remain still and in one place. They prefer to be in tighter, darker spaces rather than wide open enclosures (they feel more secure). If the trap is kept covered the cat will huddle at one end of the trap and eat at the other and will be perfectly fine. Do not worry if they defecate or urinate.

Cats cannot regulate their body temperature while metabolizing the anesthesia, so you must ensure that they don’t get too cold or too hot. Follow the instructions below to care for cats that you cannot handle.

Male cats can generally be released the afternoon following the day of surgery (that is, the afternoon of the day you pick them up, or Saturday if pick up is on Friday). In extreme cold or wet weather, please keep the cat additional nights if possible, until the weather clears, following the instructions from S.A.A.F. below.

Female cats should be kept at least 48 hours post-surgery (one more night after you pick them up from S.A.A.F.) if at all possible. In extreme cold or wet weather, please keep the cat additional nights if possible. The cat’s stitches will dissolve, so you do not need to bring her back to the clinic to have stitches removed. However, if clinic staff tells you she was likely nursing kittens, you should release her immediately. She still will be able to nurse her kittens after surgery.

Feral cats are easily stressed, and the experience of having surgery is very stressful. To minimize additional stress during recovery, make sure to follow these discharge instructions fully.

- Cats should remain in the live trap during the recovery period. Do not attempt to transfer a feral cat to a carrier or cage. Cats are very quick and can easily escape during transfer. Transferring the cats from the traps also risks injury to you and/or the cat.
- Please keep the cat in a temperature controlled, draft-free environment during their recovery. At the very least, please keep them in a sheltered area (for example, a garage or shed) out of the elements.
- Keep their traps covered at all times. This provides protection and security. Keep the trap lined underneath with newspaper to keep the cat clean and dry.
- Do not place a water dish in the trap. Feeding canned food with a little water added gives them the moisture they need for the time while they are in the trap, but be careful opening the trap to slip the food in. You can also drop the food onto the paper from the top, through the wire, so that the door does not have to be opened. For your safety, do not attempt to touch the cats.

Abnormal signs that will need attention by veterinary staff during the recovery include any discharge coming from the surgery site, abnormal smells, biting/chewing at incision site, and continued lethargy (not feeling well). If you have any concerns about the recovery of the cat, please call us at 417-831-7223

Thank you for making a difference in the cat overpopulation problem. Not only have you prevented the birth of unwanted litters of kittens, but you’ve helped this cat lead a healthier life.