

STANDARD OF CARE: FERAL CAT PROJECT
A Guide to TNR in Lethbridge

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PERSONNEL REQUIRED

Personnel	Role Description	# per Colony
Trappers	Qualified and experienced cat trappers are required to set up, monitor, observe and manage/retrieve cat traps, as per protocol, and to transport cats to and from veterinary care. The Animal Welfare Committee will need to find replacement trappers as required.	2 or more
Colony Caretakers	Compassionate and observant caretakers are required to observe the colony for incoming/outgoing cats, as well as to provide food and water and other ongoing colony care as specified in the <i>Standard of Care</i> . Caretakers can also notify the Colony Manager (on the Animal Welfare Committee) if problems arise. Community caretakers will need to find their own replacements if they go away or are unable to be a caretaker for any length of time.	2 or more
Colony Manager	The Colony Manager sits on the Animal Welfare Committee, liaises with community caregivers, and reports on the colony to the Committee. The Colony Manager ensures the colony is well managed and determines the need for trapping, food, shelter, maintenance, and veterinary care, based on observation and reports from community caregivers and others. The Colony Manager ensures that the established <i>Standard of Care</i> is enacted and oversees the compilation of ongoing records of colony constitution/membership and expenses. The Colony Manager finds a replacement from within the Committee when unable to attend to their duties for any length of time.	1
Food Deliverer	A member of the Animal Welfare Committee is responsible, as directed by the Colony Manager, for the delivery of food bags to the Colony Caretakers, on an as-needed basis.	1 or more
Senior Bylaw Officer, City of Lethbridge	The Senior Bylaw Officer or designate is responsible for granting the Colony Manager access to video footage from the managed colony.	1
Veterinarian	Participating veterinarians will provide services as negotiated and in compliance with the established <i>Standard of Care</i> . Veterinarians will liaise with the Colony Manager.	Several

PREPARE FOR TRAPPING

- **Only qualified and properly trained individuals should be involved in active trapping.** Lay people and feral cat allies also play a vital role; however, the trapping itself must be occur under qualified and experienced oversight to ensure cats are not traumatized.
- **Only use a humane box trap or drop trap to trap a feral cat.** The City of Lethbridge and the Lethbridge Animal Shelter have the proper humane traps available. These traps have rear door traps. Use only one humane box trap per cat. Kittens or a mother and her kittens may enter a trap together; this is not a problem.
- **Never attempt to pick up or handle a conscious feral cat—even a kitten.** You risk injury to yourself and the cat. A cat with no vaccination record could have rabies. A skill set is required to handle conscious feral cats once they reach 8 weeks of age.
- **Do what you can to trap all cats and kittens during your first trapping session.** This is important because the more times cats are exposed to the trapping process, the more suspicious they become of traps.
- **Feral cats are cautious of people in general.** This fact should influence every choice you make when trapping. They may feel even more frightened and threatened when faced with a new experience, like being trapped (caged) and transported to a veterinarian. This is true for cats who normally act docile around their caregivers as well. Feral cats will not communicate their needs (if they are hurt, in pain, or frightened). Instead, they will thrash about, trying to escape when in their traps or they may simply “shut down.” It is essential that you stay quiet, calm, and conscious of the cats’ well-being during your trapping ventures.
- **Every trapping effort is different.** A colony’s location—a college campus, a warehouse, a farm, an alley, a small business parking lot—will have unique elements for you to consider. Use your discretion and common sense to determine any additional steps to those provided in this guide, and tailor the basics to fit your colony’s situation. For instance, you may need to work with college administrators, connect with other caregivers, or ensure you have enough traps and vehicles for a large colony. A team approach is best.

ASSESS THE CATS AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT

- **Signs of caregivers.** If there are signs of other caregivers, such as food or water bowls, consider leaving a note with your contact information. Be clear in the note that you are there to help the cats, not to remove them. Once you’ve found any other caregivers in the area, coordinate your efforts—their cooperation could be critical for success.
- **Communicate with neighbors around the colony.** Open communication and education are important parts of conducting Trap-Neuter-Return. Many people are not aware that feral cats live and thrive outdoors and that neutering improves their lives—and they may have problems with the cats that can easily be addressed. By introducing yourself as the person to contact if neighbors have questions or concerns, you can prevent potential situations from escalating and avoid endangering the cats. Please see **Appendix A** for a sample letter for neighbours, as **Appendix B** for a sample door hanger for neighbours.
- **Use an established tracking system.** Document the number of cats and a brief description of each, including health status. Also include photos of each cat if possible. Please see **Appendix C** for a sample tracking sheet. It may be beneficial to create a colony-specific

binder that has photos of each cat and their associated information, such as sterilization status and any health issues. The Committee can maintain the binder and can also print off a binder for the colony caretakers(s). Cat information can be added, removed, and amended as required. Sample pages from a colony binder are located in Appendix D.

- **Assess cats as stray or feral.** While assessing the colony, determine if the cats are stray or feral. Stray and feral cats differ in their socialization level to people—stray cats are friendlier toward people and feral cats are more wary of people. Note the cat’s socialization level on the tracking sheet and contact the appropriate rescue group to assist after the cat has been sterilized. All cats will be checked for identification upon capture or vetting, including being scanned for microchip identification by the receiving veterinarian or by the Lethbridge Animal Shelter.

BE PREPARED FOR SPECIAL SCENARIOS

1. **Kittens and/or nursing mothers:** You may come across kittens and/or nursing mothers in your trapping efforts. There are many factors for you to take into account before you decide what your plan of action will be, including the presence of the mother, the kittens’ age, and your own resources. Factors to take into consideration include:
 - a. **Find out where the mother and kittens are.** Trapped kittens can be used to draw out and trap the mother. Leaving kittens unattended by the mother is unethical.
 - b. **Resources:** Does your organization or another local organization have time and resources to socialize kittens?
 - c. **Adoption resources:** Are homes available for the kittens?
 - d. **Age:**
 - i. In general, situations involving kittens will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
 - ii. If a nursing mother is trapped and can be sterilized and returned within 5-12 hours, consider doing so. The kittens would not have to be located by the team as the mother cat will return to them. Her milk supply will not be affected, allowing her to raise them. Ensure there is a nutritious supply of food and plenty of water.
 - iii. Kittens that are still nursing should, if possible, be kept with mother, dewormed and trapped after they are weaned. They can then be re-homed. Hand-raising kittens is time-, resource-, and labor-intensive and should not be undertaken lightly and without guarantee of available resources. Potentially, the entire family can be trapped and fostered, with the mother cat being released to the colony once the kittens are viable on their own.
 - iv. Kittens under 10 weeks of age can likely be caught, tamed and re-homed.
 - v. Healthy kittens over 4 months of age can stay in their colony, once neutered, vaccinated and returned.

For information on how to trap the entire family, see: www.alleycat.org/Kittens.

2. **Ill or injured cats:** Plan ahead to ensure you can provide immediate care to, and make decisions about, an ill or injured cat. Consider the following guidelines regarding ill or injured cats at a colony:
 - a. If the cat is suffering, trap and transport to veterinary clinic ASAP. If the cat is not suffering, note the clinical signs and notify a veterinarian at a later date. Also notify

- the colony caretakers of the issue.
- b. In general, minor injuries and illnesses will be treated (basic treatment, vaccination and antibiotics *that do not require ongoing management*). Ongoing medical management of feral cats is not possible due to their extreme distress (sometimes fatal) at being in a non-feral environment/enclosed space for any length of time and due to the unfeasibility of providing ongoing medical care and rehabilitation within a colony setting. Therefore, illnesses or injuries that result in pain and suffering and that would require care over time if treated (versus a one-time curing treatment) will not be treated therapeutically but will be treated palliatively (euthanasia) to minimize suffering. Feral cats that cannot be released “as is” after appropriate veterinary care will need to be euthanized to avoid prolonged suffering.
 - c. Cats with injuries and/or illnesses will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis in consultation with a veterinarian and in consideration of other factors such as: available resources, adoptability, likelihood of wellbeing after treatment, and need for rehabilitation.
3. **Socialized cats:** Sometimes there are socialized cats in a feral colony, having joined the colony by abandonment.
- a. All cats will be checked for identification upon intake.
 - b. Friendly cats who lack a responsible human to care for them will go to a local rescue organization or the Lethbridge Animal Shelter for adoption.

ESTABLISH A FEEDING SCHEDULE

1. **Feed:** To get the cats used to coming out and eating while you are there (and help with your assessment process), establish a set time and place to feed the cats every day. Feed the cats as much as they can eat in a 30-minute period, and pick up the food after that period. If you have a feeding station, make sure it is positioned in an area that is free of human traffic and inconspicuous. (Please note: The 30-minute period will only work if all cats can eat. A ‘pecking order’ may exist in which the more dominant cats eat first and when they leave, the others come. For this reason, some experts recommend that unless you have an accurate count of the colony, the food should not be taken away.) Starting feeding at the same time each day helps establish a pattern, which is helpful.
2. **Coordinate:** Remember to coordinate your feeding and trapping efforts with other caregivers. This will make the best use of your time and resources. Ensure colony caretakers are communicating and not over-feeding. Ensure food is provided to the documented colony caretakers.
3. **Traps:** Feed out of unset traps for one to two weeks prior to the trapping day, to get cats used to seeing and walking into them. Do not put food anywhere else but inside the trap. Remove the back door, or secure the door of the trap so it stays open. Remove traps after the cats eat so there is no risk of theft, damage, or a cat accidentally being trapped....

COORDINATE WITH A FERAL FRIENDLY VETERINARIAN OR CLINIC

At the present time (August, 2015) Bridge Pet Hospital is the partner in the Animal Welfare Committee feral cat pilot project. Their contact information and price list is in Appendix E.

The Lethbridge Feral Cat Project supports the following veterinary care as routine for ferals as part of the TNR program:

YES	AS NEEDED	NO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spay/neuter • Spay in heat • Evaluated on a case-by-case basis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Spay/abort to full term ○ Spay/neuter of kittens > 8 weeks old or over 2 lbs., depending on veterinary consultation, as 6 months is the recommended age for surgical sterilization. • Vaccination: Rabies, FVRCP if cat appears healthy • Snap testing (FeLV) (if positive, euthanize) • Deworming at time of surgical sterilization • Identification: Tattoo, toenail polish on back of both ears as a temporary identification while the trapping blitz is underway. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treatment of minor ailments and illnesses while sedated (e.g. pulling teeth, treating infected wounds, ear mite treatment) that would not require ongoing management upon release to colony • Decisions about care to be made in consultation with a veterinarian—preferably with one who is familiar with treating feral cats • A positive snap test (FeLV) will result in the euthanizing of the cat, as FeLV and FIV are terminal contagious diseases. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claws are never trimmed as they are required for survival • Topical parasite control

Items to consider when finding a vet:

Prices: Ask for the exact charge for spaying and neutering, vaccines, and all other treatments. Inquire if the veterinarian can provide a rescue group rate. Some clinics provide many services for a flat rate. Others itemize all of the services that they provide, including flea, deworming, and ear mite medication if needed, and may charge additionally for any treatments related to surgery, such as anesthesia and pain medication. Ask if these treatments are optional and then decide which services to request. All cats being sterilized should be given pain medication unless there is a medical reason not to.

Appointment Policies: Find out if the clinic understands the unpredictable nature of trapping cats. You may intend to trap six cats, but only end up trapping four. Conversely, you may think there are six cats to be trapped and then end up discovering a seventh. It’s important that the clinic be flexible in order to accommodate a few more or less cats than you expected.

Ill or Injured Cats: Know their policies concerning cats who need extra medical attention. Make sure you know how they will charge for treatments. Ask that they call you before making any decisions about procedures or how they will treat the cats. Ensure that you will be given the

ability to make the ultimate decision regarding humane euthanasia if necessary. Consider that death is not as bad as dying. Whenever possible, proceed with sterilization. Do not release a non-sterilized cat back into a colony; they will be unlikely to go back into a trap and the opportunity to trap and sterilize has been lost.

Earmites: Treat all cats for earmites while under anesthesia, applying a “best hope” treatment. Identify cats with earmites, and should one of those affected enter the trap again, administer a second treatment through the trap, prior to releasing.

Kittens: Check with the veterinarian regarding age or weight requirements for pediatric spay/neuter. Consult with a veterinarian about feeding requirements for kittens prior to trapping; kittens may not need to have food withheld before surgery because their metabolism is faster than adult cats. Pediatric spay/neuter is controversial and possibly risky; ultimately, it will be the veterinarian that makes the decision on how young he/she is willing to conduct spay/neuters.

Recovery: Find out when they discharge cats after surgery, if they have different discharge times for males, females, pregnant females, etc. Ask if they hold cats overnight for recovery in their office and if so, if there is an extra charge for this service. It is best if all surgery patients are held for 24 hours post-surgery. Early discharge from care puts cats at high risk for injury and illness.

Identification: Check that the clinic understands the importance of identifying feral cats that are already altered, and knows how to perform the procedure. Ear-tipping is not recommended in Lethbridge because it is ineffective, due to the fact that many feral cats develop frostbite and lose their ear tips in winter. The recommended identification methods in Lethbridge are: Ear tattooing (full) and putting nail polish on the back of the ears. The nail polish lasts only for a month—long enough for a spay/neuter blitz.

Other Protocols: Confirm that they use dissolvable sutures so no follow up appointment is needed, and that they will remove all items they attached to the cats, such as tags, bandages, collars, or other items that either may have identified them in the clinic or been part of their medical care.

SET UP YOUR HOLDING/RECOVERY AREA

- Often, feral cats are most comfortable recovering in their colony; being in novel environments can make them highly anxious.
- If necessary, choose an indoor, dry, temperature-controlled (about 23°C), and safe overnight holding/recovery area for use before and after the cats’ surgeries.
- Some examples of acceptable locations include bathrooms, basements, garages— or possibly your veterinarian’s office, as discussed above.
- Make sure it is quiet and inaccessible to other animals.
- Ensure that all entries in and out (doors, windows, ceiling tiles, etc.) are closed at all times in the unlikely event that a cat should escape from her trap.

ASSEMBLE YOUR TRAPPING KIT

- **Partner:** Bring a partner, for your safety, assistance and peace of mind. A cell phone and a flashlight are also helpful.
- **Traps:** The cage traps used in Lethbridge are both humane and easy to operate. You should have one trap per cat plus a few extras in case additional cats are trapped that you did not account for. Traps are also available through Margo Supplies (<http://margosupplies.com>)--the regular size is best.

All Tru-Catch Professional Live Traps Feature:

- A unique self-locking positive catch door. Once trap is activated, animal cannot back out.
- 1/4" steel frame throughout
- 14 ga. 1" x 1" wire mesh and 1/2x1 wire mesh
- Powder coated finish
- No springs or hinges
- 5 year warranty
- Unit is ideal for transporting animals
- Made in U.S.A

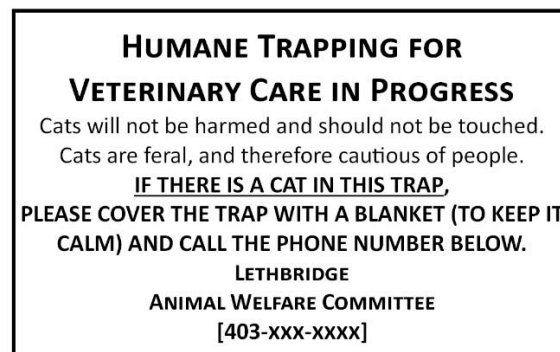
Setting Tru-Catch Traps

Raise both rings with index fingers to the top of the door and use middle finger to open door. Set door on variable trigger setting and release trigger. Tru-Catch trap is now set.

To release an unwanted catch from the traps, turn the trap over onto its top and the door will automatically open for release.



- **Bait:** Use several large pop-top cans of tuna, mackerel, sardines or other smelly fish that is tempting to cats, preferably water packed so that it does not dry out. (If you don't bring pop-top cans, be sure to bring a can opener.) Bring forks or spoons to scoop out the bait. Bring flat lids (e.g. from yogurt containers) to place under the suspended portion of the trap.
- **Wipes:** Bring wet wipes for easy clean up.
- **Something to Line the Bottom of the Trap:** Newspapers can be used. Line the bottom of the traps and tape or clothespins to hold it to trap floor, if necessary (especially for windy days). **Thin old tea towels** also work well. Or, do not line it with anything.
- **Trap Labels:** Print and laminate labels for the traps to alert concerned humans about the purpose of the trap. Make sure there is a phone number for someone to call if they are concerned. Labels can be laminated and secured with twist-ties to the trap. For example:



On the back of the trap, in dry erase pen, write the date the trap was placed and the location so that the cat can be released back to the same spot.

- **Trap Covers:** Bring trap covers that are big enough (i.e. beach size towels, blankets, or sheets— cut to size) to fully cover the top and all four sides of each trap after cats are caught, one cover per trap.
- **Trap Closures:** Use carabiners, twist ties, or pipe cleaners to secure the doors of the traps closed.
- **Garbage Bags:** Bring trash bags for tuna lids and other waste.
- **Gloves:** Wear thick leather or Kevlar gloves for your safety and comfort while carrying cats in traps.
- **Pen and Clipboard:** Keep your tracking sheet handy at all times. Bring it to the vet also.
- **Vehicle Liners:** Bring something for underneath the trap during transport to veterinary care, such as soaker pads, cardboard, large plastic garbage bags, a plastic shower curtain, or towels. Puppy pads also work well if the cats have “accidents.”
- **Hand Sanitizer and Gloves:** For your own protection, wash your hands when you’re done trapping. Always assume the presence of microorganisms (including dangerous viruses, bacteria and parasites) when working with feral cats. To avoid the spread of disease, wash your hands, spray your shoes with disinfectant, and wash your clothes after working with feral cats.

PREPARE EQUIPMENT

- Practice ahead of time how to set and bait traps. There are online photo demonstrations, linked from www.alleycat.org/Traps to help. It’s always a good idea to test all your traps before going out to ensure they are functioning properly. Attach the label mentioned above.
- Plan to use a vehicle that comfortably fits all the traps inside its climate-controlled area. You may be able to stack traps on top of one another, as long as you have a way to secure them so that there is no way for them to fall or tip over. Just be sure to use a puppy pad or folded newspaper between the traps to protect cats in lower traps.

MAKE SPAY AND NEUTER AGREEMENTS

Pick the day you will trap, and make your sterilization appointments. Schedule the appointments to occur as close to the day of trapping as possible (preferably trap the day before or the morning of the appointment); the number of reservations should equal the number of cats you plan to trap

SET-UP AND PREPARE FOR TRAPPING

1. **Make Spay/Neuter Appointment:** Make sure you have a spay/neuter appointment scheduled before trapping. Make sure you don’t need to keep the cat for too long before surgery. Trapping the night before is usually the best approach.
2. **Choose the Day:** Avoid trapping in the rain or the heat of the day without adequate protection for the trap. Cats are vulnerable in the traps and could drown or suffer heatstroke.
3. **Set Up:** Do all of your set up and preparation away from the colony site—remember, feral cats are generally fearful of people. Trapping will also go more smoothly if you don’t

disrupt the cats' feeding area. Throughout the entire trapping process, clinic stay, recovery, and return, you should make the environment around the cats as calm and quiet as possible. This will help minimize their stress.

4. **Provide Water but Not Food:** Twelve hours before trapping, withhold food, but always continue to provide water. This will ensure that the cats are hungry enough to go into the traps. Remind other caregivers and neighbors to withhold food as well.
5. **On the Day of Trapping, Prepare all of the Traps:**
 - Count all of your traps and record how many you have.
 - Line trap bottoms.
 - Before baiting, ensure the trip plate is functioning properly.
 - Bait traps. Place about three tablespoons of bait at the very back of the trap, so that the cat will step on the trigger plate while attempting to reach the food. You may choose to put the food on a safe (without sharp edges) disposable container (such as a plastic lid or paper plate). Drizzle some juice from the bait in a zigzag pattern along the trap floor toward the entrance. Also place a tiny bit of food ($\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon) just inside the entrance of the trap to encourage the cat to walk in. Do not use too much food at the entrance of the trap. The cat must be hungry enough to continue to the trip plate, and cats should have a relatively empty stomach for at least 12 hours before surgery. (The exception is kittens 3-4 months old, which can be fed up to 4 hours before surgery.)
6. **Place the Traps:** At the colony site, place traps on level ground—the cats will not enter an unstable or wobbly trap. Make sure they are not placed on a hill where they could tip or roll over when cats enter them. Use protected, wind-blocked locations. Ensure that metal traps do not sit on particularly hot or cold pavement (those temperatures could make the metal painful to the cats' paw pads when they touch it). On the trap label, write using a dry erase pen the location where you are setting the trap (exact location within colony) and the date. Set the trap and move away from the area. Be patient.
7. **Watch Closely:** Keep an eye on the traps for the safety of the cats and to make sure your equipment is not taken or tampered with. Check back every 4 hours.

ONCE CATS ARE TRAPPED

1. **Calmly Walk Over to the Traps.**
2. **Cover the Traps with Trap Covers.** As soon as the intended cat is trapped, completely cover the trap and remove the trap from the area if other cats are not in sight.
3. **Keep the Cat Trapped.** Do not open the traps or release cats once trapped— even if it appears that the cats are hurting themselves. Feral cats may thrash around after being trapped. Do not be alarmed by this—it is completely normal. Covering the trap will calm them down almost immediately. And remember; never try to touch feral cats or let them out of the trap.
4. **Check the Cat.** When you get the captured cat to a quiet area away from the other traps, lift the cover and check for signs that you have the correct animal and not a pet or previously neutered feral. If you have captured a lactating female check the area for kittens and remember that this female must be released 10-12 hours after surgery so she can care for and nurse her kittens. Cover the cat back up as soon as possible. Uncovered, the animal may panic and hurt itself thrashing around in the trap.
5. **Trapping an Entire Colony.** When trapping an entire colony, use your best judgment about removing each cat as they are trapped, since the other cats might scare, thus disrupting the

trapping. Wait to remove the trapped cats until the other cats are not around. Or when setting out your traps, partially cover the back end of the traps, which will provide the trapped cats with a bit of security until you can cover them fully. Keep in mind that these are guidelines and some situations will call for you to deviate from them. For example, if a cat is severely thrashing around you may need to go ahead and cover the trap and remove it from the area, or if you are trapping in cold weather, cats should be covered and moved to a warm location (like your car) as soon as they are trapped.

6. **Count your Traps.** Count your traps again before leaving the trapping area to ensure you don't leave any traps behind.
7. **Between Trapping and Going to the Vet.** After you have finished trapping, you will probably have to hold the cats overnight until you can take them to the vet. Do not feed the cat within 12 hours of surgery time, or within 4 hours of surgery for a kitten 3-4 months of age. Be aware that it is normal for the cat to thrash around inside the trap. It is very tempting to release him but he will not hurt himself if the trap is covered. If a cat has already hurt himself, do not release him. Most injuries from traps are very minor, such as a bruised nose, scratched paw pad, or bloody nose. Feral cats typically calm down once the trap is covered – so be sure to cover the trap to help calm the cat. Also, placing a divider (also available from Margo Supplies) in the trap may limit the space the cat has in which to hurt himself/herself. Prevent ramming, in which the cat can become quite injured.



Animal Trap Dividers/Isolators

Divider allows for smaller animals to be kept in larger carriers. The small divider (#2009A) is for use with models 30LTD, 30D, 36D carriers. The large trap divider (#2009B) works for several models including the 42D, 48HD, and 60HD.

Note: Cats can become trap-shy—frightened to go near or enter a trap, or trap-savvy—mastered the art of removing food without triggering the trap. Don't be discouraged. There are several unique but straightforward techniques to humanely trapping hard-to- trap-cats, including the use of a drop trap. Please visit www.alleycat.org/HardtoTrap.

Note to volunteers: Please record your mileage to and from the colony, and to and from veterinarian clinics. Please note the date of travel and destination.

BEST PRACTICES IN VETERINARY CARE

- Pre-surgical bloodwork is not done on ferals.
- At a time convenient (for the Committee member or volunteer dropping off the cat and for the animal health technician) take a good quality photo (e.g. with an iPhone) for colony records, so the cat can be later identified within the colony.
- If a cat is extremely ill or appears to be in pain, humane euthanasia might be a better option than surgery.
- If you will be placing the trap inside a cage, remove the cage's door to fit the whole trap inside with the rear door facing out. The trap should be uncovered and the cover stored in a location away from the trap.

- Ferals often receive sedation via an intramuscular injection, using a syringe pole to get them sedated enough to be touched. In the absence of a syringe pole, this can also be done using two isolators (trap dividers) and a regular sized syringe.
- If for some reason a cat escapes a trap in the clinic area, cat gloves can be helpful to have on hand. Some ferals can bite through the gloves though, so you might consider using a net bag. If the cat does not respond to either, the best thing to do is to be patient and re-trap.
- To ensure cats are returned to the correct traps, especially if multiple colonies are being treated at the same time, traps should be numbered and the cats logged by trap number and description. ID tags or paper tab-bands should be attached once the cats are sedated, then later removed when the cats are returned post-surgery to their traps. No two similar-looking cats should be out at the same time to avoid confusion, which could result in a cat being returned to the wrong colony, which would likely be dangerous or fatal for the cat.
- Return the cat to its trap or kennel while it is still under anesthesia. Close the rear door and double check it is secure. The cover remains off for the duration of the cat's stay in the hospital so they are visible through the traps as they recover. Remove any ID tags applied prior to or during surgery.
- Record any relevant information for ongoing colony management: Type of surgery (including whether it was a spay/abort); health condition; presence of unusual markings (for identification); approximate age; type of identification (describe tattoo in ear, color of nail polish to ear, etc.); vaccinations given; any other treatment such as parasite control; and, total cost of vet care. This information will be recorded by the Committee for ongoing colony management and reporting.
- Pain medication such as Buprinex or Metacam is administered intramuscularly. Ferals wake up much more calmly with this medication.

AFTER SURGERY

1. **Keep the veterinarian's documentation on the cat.** You will receive medical records, including rabies vaccine certificates. Save these for your files. Create or amend the profile of the cat, in the colony binder (as in Appendix D).
2. **Return in covered traps.** The cats should be returned to you in the same covered traps in which they were brought to the clinic, with clean soaker pad or old towel inside. Make sure the label is still affixed so you know where to deposit the cat within the colony.
3. **Recover in covered traps.** Let the cats recover in the covered traps. Return them to their colony to complete their recovery. Overnight recovery in a climate-controlled and quiet recovery area may be beneficial when cats are recovering from anesthesia, as they are unable to regulate their body temperature. However, overnight stays may be too traumatizing for most feral cats. While the cats are recovering, keep them in their covered traps; this reduces the stress on the cats and ensures the safety of both you and the cats.
4. **Post-operative recovery time.** Cats can be returned 24 hours after surgery or once they're clear-eyed and alert and unless advised otherwise by their veterinarian. The clinic may ask you to make exceptions for cats who are slow to recover, need continuing post-operative care, or have specific issues. A cat who received a late-term spay-abortion or underwent another extraordinary procedure should be held for a minimum of three days, depending on the advice of the veterinarian other factors including how they are coping with confinement and the environment to which they

will be returning. Consider holding cats longer in freezing weather, as anesthesia drugs may impact their ability to regulate temperature. However, it is always the goal to return the cats as soon as you can—“rapid return” is associated with better outcomes, and confinement for feral cats is extremely stressful.

5. **Monitor the cats.** Keep an eye out for bleeding, infection, illness, or lack of appetite. If a cat is shaking or shivering, lethargic, anorexic (not hungry), bleeding, vomiting, breathing irregularly, has diarrhea, or is not waking up, contact your veterinarian immediately.
6. **Feed kittens.** Feed kittens who are under six months old shortly after they wake from anesthesia. Adult cats can be fed a few hours after they have woken from anesthesia, but you may also want to wait to feed them after you return them to their colony site.
7. **Return to the colony.** Return the cats to the same location (within their colony site) where you trapped them. Early morning is a good time. Point the trap away from roads or high-traffic areas. Open the front door of the trap, or if the trap has a rear door, pull the cover away from the back door, pull that door up and off (if possible with your trap), then completely remove the cover and walk away. Be careful to keep your distance and keep your fingers and hands as far from the cat as possible when opening the trap. Sometimes it takes the cats a moment to realize where they are, but they will run off once they get their bearings. The cats may stay away from the area for a few days after being returned, but they will come back eventually. *Never release the cat into a new area unless they are in imminent danger in their current environment. Relocating cats without taking the proper steps can endanger the cat's life.*
8. **Record your mileage between the colony and the clinic.**
9. **Meet basic needs.** Once you have returned the cats, provide food and water. If you are continuing to care for them, you can then resume the cats' regular feeding schedule. As the site will likely be withholding food until all cats are trapped, it may be difficult to provide food for cats already sterilized and released. Try to feed post-operative cats before they are released. Also, set a timeframe reasonable for withholding food from the colony. Alternately, isolate and feed only the cats with painted ears.
10. **Clean the traps.** Clean traps with non-toxic disinfectant and rinse them well; throw out all newspaper, and wash trap covers.

AFTER YOU HAVE RETURNED THE ALTERED FERAL CATS

- Trap any remaining colony members that eluded your first round of trapping, and any newcomers that join the colony.
- If you will be trapping on a larger scale or if you will be continuing to trap in surrounding areas, you should implement ‘targeted trapping.’ It is the most effective method of trapping because it targets entire colonies in a single geographic location before moving on to the surrounding colonies and ensures that populations are stabilized, creating “kitten-free zones.”

ONGOING COLONY CARE

Provide Food

- The amount of food a cat needs depends on her size, the weather, and what other food sources are available. Expect an adult feral cat to eat roughly 5.5 ounces of wet (canned) cat

food and 2 ounces of dry food daily (increase to a half cup if only feeding dry). Cats vary in their needs, and so some will eat considerably more food, others less.

- To avoid confusion about who is feeding the colony cats, ensure colony caretakers communicate with one another. As well, if possible standardize colony feeding times.
- While gauging how much to leave, observe the cats and use your discretion based on the time it takes for the food to be eaten by all cats within their social hierarchy. Although most cats clearly enjoy canned food, feeding a colony dry food alone is fine as well. It is less expensive and just as nutritious.
- Make sure cats have access to fresh water year round.
- In the winter, expect the colony to consume more food because they will need extra calories to maintain energy levels. In places where wet food may freeze, it is advisable to just feed dry food. If you know the colony will eat right away, and you plan to feed canned food, consider warming the food prior to arriving at the site and using insulated bags to keep the food warm during travel.
- Never allow wet food to sit out, as it may attract insects or wildlife.
- Do not expect all of the cats to eat at the same time or worry that some may not be getting their share. Within a colony, cats with seniority or stronger personalities may eat before those who are lower on the social scale. Those who eat first leave food for the others. Do not be concerned about or try to manage this social interaction. It is perfectly normal.
- Keep the feeding location neat and clean, for the health of the cats and for community relations.

Provide Water

- Outdoor cats need clean water daily and during all conditions. Throughout the winter months, here are tips to keep the water from freezing:
 - Use heated water bowls (if near an electrical outlet);
 - Keep the water in the sun and use dark colored bowls that will absorb the sun's heat;
 - Use a solar powered bowl;
 - Use wider and deeper and insulated or double-layered bowls;
 - Use microwavable disks called Snuggle Safe Disc under the water bowl;
 - Surround the top and sides of the feeding area with Plexiglas to create a greenhouse environment for the water; and,
 - Shield the bowl from wind.

If you notice that the cats are not using the water you provide, try moving it a short distance away from their food. Cats sometimes prefer this arrangement.

Feeding Locations and Stations

- Building a feeding station and establishing a specific area for feeding can help camouflage where the cats eat and make colony management easier on the caregiver. The goal is for this area to not be visible to the public. Feeding stations help deter insects from the food by raising it off of the ground; having a roof protects the food from the elements. It also helps with Trap-Neuter-Return efforts, since cats are fed at the same place every day making it easy to know where to trap. Also, you can gradually and easily move the feeding stations

when needed to address neighborhood concerns. In colder climates, feeding cats at a regular time and place ensures that the cats know when and where to go to be fed.

- Find a sheltered spot or build a canopy to cover the food. Suitable feeding stations can easily be fashioned by someone with basic carpentry skills or with household items. It is important to camouflage the feeding station as much as possible. One way to do this is to paint the shelters with dark green or brown paint.
- Food should be situated away from high traffic areas and not too close to the cats' shelters, where they sleep, or the place where they eliminate. Some caregivers create a feeding station in their garage, shed, or car port if the colony is behind or near their home. When colonies live in a workplace environment or campus, caregivers sometimes work with maintenance or grounds departments so that cats can be fed in outbuildings, which aids in reducing visibility to colony feeding areas.

Cleanliness

- Removing all garbage and feeding trash daily or weekly will help make the feeding station sanitary and unobtrusive. Many caregivers realize that it is important to pick up the trash in the area, even garbage they did not create. This helps avoid possible health code violations and maintain positive relations with the local residents.

Deterring Insects

- Keep the food off the ground.
- Surround the food bowl with a ring of baking soda.
- Place a tray or flowerpot tray with about half an inch to an inch of water in it on the feeding station platform and then place the food bowl on the tray.
- Keep your feeding areas clean, especially in hot, humid weather and always remove feeding dishes within 30 minutes.
- Cut back, or completely cut out, the amount of wet food that you feed, because dry food tends to attract fewer bugs. Be sure to add more dry food to compensate.
- Elevate feeding stations slightly off the ground and surround them with a line of food-grade diatomaceous earth without chemical additives (available from some natural food stores and environmentally conscious pet-care supply companies). The diatom dust should be reapplied after rainstorms. Note that diatomaceous earth sold for swimming pool filters is *not* safe to use for this purpose.

Providing Shelter

- **Safety:** Some colonies find shelter for themselves in a shed or under a building where their safety is uncertain. Consider building a shelter for the cats. It can keep them safe from the elements and help you control their location and deter them from neighbors' properties.
- **Size:** A good size for a shelter is at least 2x3' and at least 18" high. Larger shelters are not necessarily better, since heat disperses quickly, leaving the inside as cold as the outside. A space just big enough for three to five cats to huddle is best. Cats generally use shelters during winter months more than others. Consider size for transport in your vehicle to and from the colony site as well. Again, camouflage the shelter as much as possible using dark

green or brown paint. Anything that stands out could be mistaken for trash and could bring unwanted attention to the cats. For the Committee's pilot project, the Lethbridge Correctional Centre agreed to have inmates build cat houses, using supplies donated and gathered from participating construction sites and businesses.

- **Maintenance:** Shelters should be checked regularly to ensure their optimum quality and function. When deciding what kind of shelter to use, remember that some of the low-cost suggestions will need to be checked and replaced more frequently than some of the more permanent and professionally built shelters.
- **Doorway:** Make sure that the door is only big enough for cats. The door should be 6-8" wide to keep out wildlife and larger predators. The opening should have a flap or an L-shaped entryway to keep cold air from blowing in. If neither option is possible, make sure the door faces away from prevailing winds or faces a wall. Some caregivers prefer shelters that have two doors so cats cannot be cornered.
- **Protection from the Elements:** You can ensure that the cats are protected by making shelters waterproof, windproof (especially in cold climates), and elevated off the ground. Discarded pallets from shipping firms or hardware, farm supplies, or pet stores are a good option for elevation. The space beneath the shelters should be blocked from drafts. Insulation is a good material to use.
- **Bedding:** Straw resists the wet and keeps a shelter warm, and is the best choice for insulation and bedding. Be sure to use straw—not hay—for feral cat shelters. Do NOT use blankets, carpeting, fake sheepskin, or any material that holds moisture. You can also use hardwood shavings (not cedar or pine), but keep in mind that softwood shavings are not suitable due to possible toxicity. Some caregivers in locations with long, cold winters use Mylar blankets as bedding. Mylar is a product that retains body heat. The generic term for Mylar is Polyester Film or Plastic Sheet. These sheets can be purchased from survival and outdoor stores as thermal safety blankets, or online at websites such as Amazon.com.
- **Camouflage:** Shelters should blend in with their surroundings so that they are not obtrusive to neighbors. Cover them with leaves or other brush or paint them a dark color. Moving shelters into wooded areas away from buildings, parking lots, and other high-traffic areas is also a good idea for cat safety and to avoid neighbor complaints.
- **Deter wildlife:** Wildlife may decide to make their home in the shelters you provide for the cats. Reducing the shelter door to an opening 6" wide may solve this predicament. Do not use repellants because most of them will repel the cats as well. Some caregivers have resorted to providing additional shelters, accepting that some will be used by wildlife.

Monitoring members of the colony and providing ongoing health care

- **Health:** It is a good idea to keep an eye on the cats for general good health. Common indicators of health problems or injury include: changes in behavior, changes in eating habits, dull eyes or coat, discharge from the nose or eyes, weight loss, fur loss, changes in their gait, and listlessness.
- **Veterinarian Care:** Have a plan with your veterinarian for how to handle any health problems and for ongoing colony care. When a health problem occurs, speak with your veterinarian first and describe the symptoms so that you can decide together if a sick cat needs to be trapped and examined.

Ongoing Health Care Covered in the Lethbridge Feral Cat Project:

Item	Routine?	Comments
Topical flea control	No	
Earmites	No	If observed and trapped, treat locally and release again
Deworming	Only with sterilization	
Infection control	As needed	One time treatments only
Euthanasia for illness or injury	As needed when the cat is suffering and would require ongoing care if treated	

- **Bedding and Sanitation:** Change the bedding in shelters at least twice a year. At that time, spray or dust the floor with a cat-safe flea control product. Or, sprinkle food-grade diatomaceous earth beneath the straw to deter fleas. Sprinkling mint or dried pyrethrum flowers beneath the bedding may also help. Fleas are a natural part of life outdoors, so while you can try your best to control them, they are not something you need to be worried about excessively.
- **Record Keeping:** You should hold on to all medical records for each cat in every colony for which you care. A medical record should contain a listing of each vaccination (especially rabies) and any other medical procedures. The record should also include documentation of the cat’s neuter and, if the cat was micro-chipped, the manufacturer, and the number of the chip. Include a photo of each cat with his or her record. Make sure to update the photo occasionally as their coloring and size can change with age. Always be prepared for the possibility that someone such as animal control could question the status of your colony. This is why it is important to keep current, accurate health records for all of the cats.
- **Tracking Costs:** Keep track of all expenses related to colony work. If items are donated, please record them as “in kind” donations. All expenses and donations of time and resources must be tracked so that this information can be accurately presented to the City of Lethbridge, our funder. A sample expense sheet is in Appendix F.
- **Plan for someone to care for the colony in your absence.**

WE NEED YOUR HELP

DEAR CARING NEIGHBORS,

We desperately need your help. As you are aware, we have a feral cat problem in this area. Spring will soon be upon us and that problem will be multiplying.

Through some research and dedication and support of the City of Lethbridge, we have found an answer to our problem, unfortunately not a solution, which would be to place these poor animals in homes.

The feral colony in this area has been selected for targeted action by the City of Lethbridge's Animal Welfare Committee. Working with Committee volunteers, the No-Kill Animal Association, and local cat rescue groups, we will be conducting a Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) program. In this program, we will humanely trap each cat, bring it to a veterinarian for spaying/neutering (surgery to prevent further reproduction), and then returning the cat to its colony where it can live out the rest of its life.

We are not asking for your help in catching these cats or for your help transporting them, but we wanted to let you know what we were doing to help manage this problem. We hope that through this project we will:

- Humanely decrease the number of feral cats in this area.
- Reduce problem behaviors such as cats digging up your grass or garden.
- Reduce the number of fleas from the grass brought into your home.
- Reduce and eliminate the incidence of sick, suffering kittens.
- Lower the noise – no more crying cats in heat at all hours of the night.
- Reduce the chances of bringing diseases into your home or business.
- Reduce the odor of cat urine by spaying and neutering.
- Stop attracting new cats to the colony because the females won't be give off the "I'm in heat" scent, allowing us to continue keeping the cat population to a minimum.

Whether you are an animal lover or not, we, as a community, have a responsibility to each other and the betterment of our community.

Sincerely,

The Animal Welfare Committee
City of Lethbridge

APPENDIX B: DOOR HANGER



If you are feeding the local outdoor cats,
thank you for being a good neighbor!

**Learn about Lethbridge's FREE
Trap-Neuter-Release for Stray and Feral Cats**

**Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) programs decrease
feral cat populations without harming the cats.**

The cats are trapped with humane traps and taken to a
veterinarian to be neutered and vaccinated.

The vet will also mark their ears so we know
which cats are already neutered.

We need your help to feed and care for the cats when
they are returned to home.

Neutered cats make better neighbours: less noise,
fighting, and spraying, and no more litters of kittens!

**If you feed the cats, want to help, or just want to
learn more, please call 403-XXX-XXXX or email
feralcats@lethbridge.ca**

Thank you!
The Animal Welfare Committee, City of Lethbridge

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE TRACKING SHEET (EXCEL)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
1	Colony Location	Date Trapped/By	Name of Cat	Color and Markings	Age	Sex	Clinic	Surgery (S, N, SA) Spay Neuter Spay/Abort	ID (T, MC, NP, ET) Tattoo Microchip Nail polish Ear Tipping L/R	Vaccinations Rabies Distemper	Parasites	Condition/Health	Outcome (F, R, E, O) Fostered Returned to colony Euthanized Other	\$	Photo?
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3															
4															
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6															
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Animal Welfare Committee



Managed Feral Cat Colony

Location: (ADDRESSES and DETAILS)

Comments: .

Dates Managed: May 2015 (Managed Prior by NOKA)

Committee Contact: Tia White 403-XXX-XXXX

Alternate Contact: Sheri Merchant 403-XXX-XXXX

Animal Welfare Committee



Managed Feral Cat Colony

Caretakers and Contact Information:

Pippi Longstocking, 711 3 Street S. 403-715-6310 (feeds)

Jo Visser,



Name	Cookie
Color and Markings	DSH, Tabby
Sex	F
Sterilization Status	Spayed (August 2015)
Approx. Age	3
Condition/Health	Good
Date Trapped/By	TW, August 2015
Clinic	Northside
Spay/Neuter/Abort	Spay/Abort
ID* (Details)	Tattoo "S" left ear, pink polish x2
Vaccinations Given	FVRCP, Rabies
Date of Vaccination	2015
Parasite Control	Earmites
Cost of Vet Care	\$257.69
Other Vet Care?	
Left Colony? **	

*Tattoo (location, description), Nail Polish (color), MicroChip, Ear Tipping (L, R)

**Cats assumed to be returned to colony unless: Fostered, euthanized, deceased

APPENDIX E: BRIDGE VET HOSPITAL INFORMATION

Bridge Pet Hospital
728-13 St N Lethbridge AB T1H 2T1
(403) 942-1788

Society/City Price Agreement

Prices valid June 15, 2015 to Dec 31, 2015

Prices are subject to change. Medications may be substituted based on availability and individual patient's needs.

Vaccines Feline

Vaccine Exam	\$36
Rabies	\$15
FeLV/HCP combo	\$22
HCP only	\$15
All vaccines and Exam	\$73
All Vaccines with Surgery	\$37
FeLV/FIV Snap w blood collection	\$60

Vaccines Canine

Vaccine Exam	\$36
Rabies	\$15
DAPP2	\$15
Bordetella	\$18
All Vaccines and Exam	\$84
All Vaccines with Surgery add on	\$48

Feline Surgeries

Spay	\$165
Neuter	\$65
Abort add on	\$40
In heat/ mature add on	\$20

Canine Spays

Spay <15kg	\$200
Spay 15-30kg	\$225
Spay 30-45kg	\$250
Spay >45kg	\$275
Abort add on	\$60
In heat/ Mature add on	\$40

Canine Neuters

Neuter	\$150
10% off any other add ons (not including laser)	

Feline Feral Packages - NOKA only - sterilization, vaccines, advantage multi/revolution, droncit, pain medication.

Female	\$225
Male	\$140

Euthanasia

Society Euth Canine/Feline no ashes <7kg	\$150	Society Euth Canine no ashes 15-30kg	\$175
Society Euth Canine/Feline no ashes 7-15kg	\$165	Society Euth Canine no ashes >30kg	\$200

Other

Society Health Exam	\$45
Dental scale/polish and extractions Feline/Canine	10% discount
Diagnostics, medicines, after hours fee and food paid by society - discount on normal price	10% discount

All parties understand and agree to the above listed prices and terms:

Society Representative Signature, Date

Society Representative Signature, Date

Rohit Chhabra DVM, Bridge Pet Hospital

Spencer McCoy, Bridge Pet Hospital

APPENDIX F: SAMPLE EXPENSE SHEET

Date	Name	Vendor/Description	\$	Comments

References

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- Alley Cats and Angels of North Carolina. (n.d.). Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) and Feral Colony Management Guidelines (2.0 ed.).
- American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals [ASPCA]. (2010). Feral Cat Sterilization Guidelines.
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