

The Neighborhood Cats Drop Trap



Instructions

Setting Up

1. Select the Location

(a) **Good visibility.** You'll need to be able to see the trap clearly from a distance so you can tell when to pull the string and drop the trap.

(b) **Flat surface.** Choose a place where the ground is flat. If there are any gaps between the trap and the ground, a determined cat can insert a paw and lift the trap enough to escape.

(c) **Place near the usual feeding site.** Ideally, the trap will be set up where the cats are used to coming to eat.

(d) **Leave space for a box trap.** Remember, you're going to have to transfer cats from the drop trap so always remember to leave room so the sliding rear door of a box trap can line up against the sliding door of the drop trap.

2. Assemble the Drop Trap

(a) **First steps.** Unfold the main frame of the trap so that it forms a square. Unhook the weight flap (*photo 1*), then remove the sliding door and temporarily put it aside.



1. Weight flap unfolded.

(b) **Attach the top.** Unfold the top then place it over the main frame of the drop trap (*photo 2*). Attach all the spring clips, except the two immediately next to the sliding door frame, to the top (*photo 3*). Make sure all the hooks are fastened so no gaps can open if a cat pushes against the top.



2. Top over main frame

(c) **Re-insert the sliding door.** Secure the roll hooks at the top of the sliding door to the top of the drop trap.

(d) **Anchor the trap.** Place a heavy object, such as a large rock, on top of the weight flap. This will help keep the trap in place once a cat is caught inside.



3. Attach spring clips to top

(e) **Raise prop bar.** Lift the side of the trap with the prop bar and position the raised trap so it rests securely on the prop bar. Your cord should be tied to the bottom of the prop bar, below the cross-bar.



4. Prop bar in raised position

3. **Bait the Drop Trap**

(a) **Fill the bowl.** Unbreakable feeding bowls are your best bet. If the cats are accustomed to a particular bowl, use that. Make sure the bait dish is deep enough to hold a generous amount of food so that if the cat(s) you're after don't arrive until several others have come and eaten their fill, there will still be bait left.

(b) **Position the bowl.** Place the filled bowl in the center of the back of the trap (the back of the trap is the side to which the weight flap is attached). This way the cat will have to go as far into the trap as possible before settling in to eat (*photo 5*).



5. Bowl in center-back.

(c) **Create a trail.** To encourage skittish cats or kittens who may have difficulty finding the food to enter the trap, leave a bait trail. Crumbled cat treats, juice from canned mackerel or small bits of chicken usually work well.

4. **Final Setup**

(a) **Box trap.** Place a box trap with a sliding rear door, which the captured cat will be transferred into, within arm's length of the drop trap. Also place covers for both the drop trap and box trap within easy reach. It's also highly recommended that you have a trap divider on hand as well, in case two cats end up in the box trap.

(b) **Position yourself.** Unwind the cord and move far enough away from the trap that the cats will not be uneasy with your presence. Be sure, when holding the string, that you are facing the prop stick head on and not from the side. If you pull the bar from the side, it may jam.

Dropping the Trap

1. Be Patient!

Wait until the cat or cats have settled at the back of the trap and are fully engaged in eating with their backs towards you, then give the cord a good yank. It's very important to wait until the cat has settled into eating and not looking in your direction before pulling the cord. DO NOT pull as soon as a cat steps under the trap or if the cat appears nervous or furtive. If the cat is not calm and eating, he may be able to escape after you pull but before the trap reaches the ground. If this happens, the cat may become too frightened to return. It is possible a nervous cat will walk under the trap then out again before you can safely pull the cord, but he will most likely return if you're patient.

2. Avoid Injury!

Be aware there is a risk of serious injury if a cat is hit by a falling trap. Do not drop the trap unless the cat or cats are settled at the feeding bowl facing away from you. Do not drop the trap if a cat is sitting or standing under the edge of the trap while another cat is eating. Use extra caution when trapping kittens or sick or injured cats who may have difficulty walking or running.

3. Wait for Your Target Cat

If you're after a particular feline like a pregnant cat or a wily, hard-to-catch feral, avoid dropping the trap on other cats until you've caught that priority one. While usually other nearby cats will scatter then come back after one of their mates has been drop-trapped, you don't want to give a scaredy-cat any reason to be suspicious of the trap.

Transferring From Drop Trap to Box Trap

1. Cover the Drop Trap

Once a cat is in the drop trap **immediately** cover the entire trap with a blanket (use a blanket rather than a sheet; it will block out more light, and also provide added protection during the transfer). If you're standing at a distance *run*, don't walk to get the cover in place because if a cat is very wild, covering him should have a calming effect. Wait for the cat to settle down before attempting the transfer.

2. Line Up and Secure the Box Trap

Align the rear door of the box trap with the sliding door of the drop trap, making sure there are no gaps between the traps (*photo 6*). Cover the box trap with a towel or sheet

but be sure not to cover the far end; you want the cat to think that by going towards the light at the end of the trap, he's heading for an exit.

3. Attach the Spring Clips

Extra spring clips are located right next to the drop trap's door frame (one on either side). Attach these to the box trap (*photo 7*). This will help keep both traps in place and prevent gaps. But **be careful not to pull the clips too far and tight** or you'll make it difficult to open and close the sliding door of the drop trap. After you've secured the clips onto the box trap, test opening and closing the drop trap door. If there's too much resistance, loosen the spring clips and don't pull them out as far before re-attaching to the box trap.

4. Position Yourself

Place one foot on top of the box trap to further secure it in place. Make sure the traps are covered in a manner that the cat can't see you as he approaches the doors. You can leave just a sliver of the top of the box trap near the rear door uncovered so you can see when the cat is entering.

5. Open the Doors

When you're ready, unhook the sliding door of the drop trap, then open both the sliding door of the drop trap and the rear door of the box trap at the same time. Don't completely remove either door, but hold them up and open (*photo 8*). Wait quietly for the cat to make the next move. Within a minute or two, most cats will see light coming from the far end of the box trap and head in that direction. Once the cat fully enters the box trap, slide the rear door of the box trap shut and, if you've caught more than one cat, also shut the sliding door of the drop trap. Completely cover the box trap and then carry away.

6. Problem Kitties

(a) **Uncover the top of the drop trap.** If the cat doesn't move towards the doors, try slowly pulling the cover over the drop trap towards you. Feral cats will tend to move from bright, open areas to dark, covered ones so exposing the top of the drop trap will encourage the cat to move towards the covered box trap.



6. Line up doors



7. Attach clips to box trap



8. Open both doors.

(b) **Use your partner** - If you have someone helping you, ask him to walk to the side of the drop trap opposite you, kneel down to the cat's eye level and stare right at him (your assistant should remain a few inches back to avoid getting scratched). The cat will usually respond by running in the other direction, towards the doors. If that doesn't happen, your partner poking towards the cat with a long, thin rod (without actually hitting him) may do the trick.

(c) **Be patient (again)!** If no one is available to help just wait patiently and quietly. Remain silent to help him forget you're there.

5. **Two Cats in the Box Trap**

If you've caught two cats in the drop trap and both have gone into the box trap, immediately separate them with a trap divider. If you don't have a divider, completely cover the box trap and wait for the cats to calm down. **Do not** attempt to transfer a cat from one box trap to another until you're in a secure holding space.

6. **Repeat Transfer for Any Remaining Cats**

If there are any cats remaining in the drop trap, completely cover the drop trap, secure another box trap and repeat the transfer procedure.

7. **Escapes**

If a cat escapes – don't give up! He may return later that same day and enter the drop trap again. It's helpful if there are other cats in the area who the escaped cat can observe going into the trap and eating without incident. Don't drop the trap again on any other cat until you've re-caught the one you're after.

Disassembling the Drop Trap

1. Disconnect the top by pulling the spring clips loose. **IMPORTANT!** – re-attach the spring clips onto the top of the main frame of the trap. Don't let the clips hang loosely or they will become tangled with other parts of the trap and may break.
2. Raise the weight flap and re-attach to the main frame of the trap with the two roll hooks.
3. Insert the sliding door if it's been removed.
4. Fold flat the main frame and top.

Keep in Mind...

1. Trapping works best when you don't do anything to alarm the cats. So avoid walking back and forth to the drop trap more than absolutely necessary. If you have to restock the bait or make some other adjustment, remember to **walk**, not run to the trap. That will give the cats plenty of time to scatter without feeling threatened. Fix the problem, take a moment to observe if any of your hard-to-catch targets seem to be lurking in the area, then walk casually back to your post.
2. Never try to chase away any cats you're not trying to trap. Let them go under the trap, eat and leave. Think of them as furry goodwill ambassadors - the elusive cat you're after is probably watching the others enjoying a nice meal and gaining confidence to eventually go do the same.
3. For night-time trapping, headlights or a strong flashlight can be used to illuminate the drop trap. The light won't deter the cats.

For more information about drop traps and other useful TNR info please visit www.neighborhoodcats.org.