



Friends of Feral Felines

CAT'S TALE

Spring 2006



Trapping Hard-to-Catch Cats

By Michelle Nedopak, FFF Volunteer

Spaying and neutering all feral cats in a colony is the key to humanely managing their numbers, but managing to catch all the cats is quite an achievement in itself.

What works to trap one cat will not necessarily work for all cats in the colony. Sometimes, several methods must be tried before finding one to successfully trap a particularly wily cat.

The first element of success in trapping is having knowledge of the correct way to use the trap. Before setting the trap, make sure that it works properly and that you understand how to use it.

Since cats are naturally wary, some will need to be conditioned to the trap before they will even try to enter. The process can take up to a few weeks. To get the cats accustomed to the trap, place the trap in the area where you normally feed them. Secure the trap door with wire, rope, or string so that it remains open. Start by placing food a few feet away from the trap. Each day, move the food closer to the trap, then begin placing it inside. Gradually move the food further toward the back of the trap a few inches each day, then let the cat eat out of the unset trap for a few days before removing the string or wire and setting it normally.

If you have many cats in the colony, it may be helpful to set out several traps in this manner to let all the cats eat out of them. If they see other cats eating out of the traps, the most wary cats may be more likely to enter. If the location is not very secure, it may be necessary to chain the trap to an object such as a tree or fence to prevent it from being stolen.

When you're at the end of your rope and unable to catch a crafty feral cat, try some of these tips:

Set the trap at the normal feeding time and location. Remove all food from the area to ensure that the cat is hungry enough to enter a trap. It may be necessary to deprive all the cats in the colony of food for 24 to 48 hours to trap the hard-to-catch cats.

Cover the trap with a dark towel or sheet. Try leaving the back uncovered and if that does not work, try covering it. If you normally cover a trap, try leaving it uncovered to see if the reverse works.

Camouflage the trap to make it blend in with the surroundings. Cover the trap with leaves or branches.

Place the trap up against a nearby object, such as a wall, fence, or garbage dumpster, rather than leaving it out in the open.

Line the floor of the trap with newspaper, since some

cats don't like stepping on the metal wire of the trap. Leaves or grass clippings can also be placed on the newspaper to make it appear more like the ground. If it is windy, make sure that the



newspaper does not flap or rustle too much, which may frighten cats away. Use clothespins or clips to hold the newspaper in place. Make sure that the newspaper and clips do not prevent the trap door from closing securely.

If trapping more than one cat at a time, make sure to remove all bits of food from the ground before setting out another trap. As soon as a cat is trapped, cover the trap and remove it from the area so that any sounds of the cat jumping around in the trap will not scare away other cats.

Use a variety of baits at the same time, in case a cat prefers one over another. Leave a small piece of bait at the front of the trap for a taste, and trail bits of food or juice into the back of the trap, but be sure not to leave out enough so that the cat gets satisfied before reaching the back of the trap.

Ensure that the trap is on a stable surface where it will not wobble or rock, which can scare off a cat or result in the trap being set off before the cat is completely inside.

Leave the area after setting out the traps, since most cats are unlikely to enter the traps with people nearby. If not trapping near your home, you could hide behind bushes or trees, or wait in your car.

If you have multiple traps available to use, try placing them in different locations and facing different directions.

If cats are eating bait without setting off the trap, it's time to get creative. Use a piece of cardboard to extend the trip plate, creating a larger area for cats to step on to set off the trap. Dangle bait from a string tied to the roof of the trap. Cats may step on the trip plate while trying to pull bait from the string. Place bait underneath, rather than in the trap. Cats will have to work to get the food, instead of grabbing a bite and running out without stepping on the trip plate. Create a zigzag pattern out of the bait trail in the trap to encourage a cat to move around and increase the likelihood of stepping on the trip plate.

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Letter From Ann Gross, Co-director of Friends of Feral Felines



Dear Friends,

Nothing touches the heart of a rescuer more tenderly than an animal in need - the homeless, the hungry and the sick/injured. It touches a chord in our hearts that is not easily quieted.

Our volunteers in Friends of Feral Felines concentrate their best efforts on the homeless and feral cats in our communities because the need is great. To this end, we wish to bring to your attention, "The Declaration of the No Kill Movement in the United States."

It can be accessed on www.nokilldeclaration.org. Several excerpts from this policy include:

- ♦ The right to live is every animal's most basic and fundamental right
- ♦ Every year, shelters in the U.S. are killing millions of...feral cats who do not belong in shelters
- ♦ Feral cats have a right to their lives and their habitats
- ♦ Shelters and humane organizations need to end a killing of healthy animals, including feral cats
- ♦ Shelters and humane organizations should promote high volume, low and no-cost spay/neuter programs
- ♦ Trap-Neuter-Return or Release (TNR) programs for feral cats should be available to the public
- ♦ An end to temperament testing that results in killing animals who are not truly vicious (e.g. shy/timid cats or frightened dogs) who can be placed in homes or



Volunteer Spotlight: Lisa Steffy

Have you called our hotline, borrowed equipment to trap cats, or brought cats to one of our Feral Angel Cat Clinics? If you answered yes to one or more of these questions, chances are, you had contact with Lisa Steffy, one of the Co-Directors of Friends of Feral Felines.

Lisa and her family - husband, Greg, son, Blake, and daughter, Tamara - moved to Charlotte from Pittsburgh, PA, eight years ago. Growing up, Lisa and her family traveled frequently, showing their prized cats, so she has lots of experience! Aside from her love of cats, Lisa is a huge Pittsburgh Steelers fan and she will proudly tell anybody she "bleeds black and gold"!

In addition to talking to many, many callers on the hotline and loaning out equipment, Lisa is also the clinic director. She is responsible for compiling and purchasing all the medical supplies and equipment we need to ensure our clinics run smoothly and effectively. She also coordinates dates with the vets, vet techs and volunteers, and helps with our annual Christmas book wraps at Barnes & Noble, helps at our many fundraisers and pet expos, and bakes delicious chocolate chip cookies and lemon cake that is sold at the area cat shows we attend!

feral cats who can be returned to their habitat

- ♦ Abolishment of lending traps to public or trapping by shelters, governments and pest control companies for the purpose of removing animals to be killed
- ♦ We assert that a No Kill nation is within our reach - that the killing can and must be brought to an end. It is up to each of us working individually and together to implement sheltering models that have already saved tens of thousands of animals in progressive communities
- ♦ If we work together - with certainty of purpose, assured of our own success, with the commitment that "what must be done, will be done" - the attainment of our goals will not be far off.

We support their efforts. The innocent animals deserve humane and fair treatment by our citizens. Your support is needed for their health and survival in our challenging world.

Thank you for your compassion and the efforts you have already made on their behalf. It has made a world of difference. Trap-Neuter-Return and spay/neuter programs are the most effective and humane approaches to ending the overpopulation of homeless animals.

Please let us continue to go forward together, knowing full well that we are choosing the right and just path for our community animals.



Feral Update

Since 1998, approximately 4,000 cats sterilized and vaccinated



Lisa enjoys yard work and taking trips to Florida and Pennsylvania to visit with family. Though volunteering with FFF takes many hours "after hours", Lisa finds time to work as a dental hygienist during the week!

Lisa definitely has a full plate, but as you will always hear her say, "It's all for the cats."



Lisa Steffy, FFF Co-Director & Volunteer

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For newsletter submissions, mailing address changes, or to be removed from the FFF mailing list, please email feralnews@yahoo.com

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Donate to Friends of Feral Felines

Spring and summer are the nicest seasons of the year; however, they are also breeding season for cats, and this causes a sense of panic for volunteers and rescuers! The number of cats put through our TNR program has steadily increased every year, thus increasing the number of subsidies we offer. Your generous donations contribute to subsidies for spay/neuter of feral cats. We hope you continue to support the work we are doing by mailing your donation in the enclosed self-addressed envelope. 100% of your donation is tax-deductible.

Thank you for your assistance!

FFF Volunteer Update

We attended the Carolina Sophisticats Hearts 'Afire CFA Cat Show in February and the CFA Southern Crafty Cat Show in April. Both were a great success. Thanks to our volunteers who donated cat craft items and baked goods and helped at our table the days of the shows.

May 25 - 27, we are participating in Food Lion Speed Street at concession station selling wine coolers. To volunteer for this event, please contact Allison McLean. You can view the available dates and times on our volunteer website listed below.

Be sure to attend our General Meeting on June 7 at the Morrison Library. We will be selling Auto Bell car washes as one of our summer fundraisers and need your help! Car wash tickets are \$11.95, so start getting the word out and pick up tickets at the June meeting.

Thank you for all you do! We couldn't do it without you.

Allison McLean, FFF Volunteer Coordinator
fffvolunteer@excite.com
<http://geocities.com/fffvolunteer>

Special apologies and thanks to Carol Martin, long-time FFF Volunteer. She was inadvertently left out of the Winter newsletter. Carol volunteered for our Christmas book wrapping and at the December cat show, and she continuously volunteers at our Angel Cat Clinics.

A Prayer for Animals

By Albert Schweitzer

Hear our humble prayer, O God,
For our friends the animals,
Especially for animals who are suffering;
For any that are hunted or lost or deserted or
frightened or hungry;

For all that must be put to death.

We entreat for them all Thy mercy and pity,

And for those who deal with them we ask a
heart of compassion and gentle hands and kindly
words.

Make us, ourselves, to be true friends to animals
and so to share the blessings of the merciful.

Trapping Hard-to-Catch Cats

Continued from front page

If cats are trying to grab the bait from outside the trap, tuck a towel or sheet tightly around it so that cats can only reach the bait by entering the trap.

For cats that are still trap-shy after your efforts, it may be necessary to catch them using something other than a traditional box trap. These will also work for cats who, for some reason, seem "too smart" to catch.

A drop trap is a lightweight frame covered with netting or other material. One side of the trap is propped up, and food



Drop Trap (photo courtesy of HubCats)

is placed toward the opposite end. A string is attached to an object propping up the trap, which can be a thin board or stick, and the trapper holds the other end of the string. The trapper stands a short distance away, after determining how far the string will reach, then pulls the string and allows the trap to drop down when a cat is underneath. Rather than enter the confined space of a box trap, the cats usually don't even recognize that it's a trap and walk right underneath. The cats must be safely transported, usually with the assistance of another person, into a humane trap for transport.

A large net with a drawstring can also be used to trap cats, but it is very important that a trapper knows how to use it properly to avoid injuring the cat. Food is placed in the center of the net, with the net lying on the ground. After a cat walks onto the net to reach the food, the trapper pulls the net up quickly, while pulling the drawstring tight. With extreme caution, the net is placed up against the opening of a covered humane trap and the drawstring is loosened. The cat will run out of the net and into the dark trap. The trap is quickly closed, and the cat is ready to be transported.

The trap-in-a-box involves placing the trap inside a wooden or cardboard box in order to disguise the trap. If the cats' shelter has a hinged or removable top, the trap can also be placed inside the shelter. The box is used as a feeding station, then a trap is placed inside when it is time to catch a cat. The box must be large enough to fit a trap inside with the front door of the trap fully open.

If you feed near your home and are able to lure the cat into a closed space, such as a garage or enclosed porch, you may be able to patiently withhold all other sources of food until the cat is hungry enough to enter a normal trap. To make the process go faster, remove all possible hiding spaces for a cat, and lean a board against a wall with the trap underneath. The cat may easily run straight into the trap while running for a place to hide.

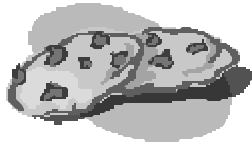
Successfully trapping feral cats can be a challenge, but having all feral cats in the colony spayed or neutered is a proud accomplishment for any caretaker.

For more information, please call the FFF hotline at 704-348-1578, or visit our website, www.friendsofferalfelines.org. Details for building a box trap can be found at www.alleycat.org.

Fundraising Update: Local Cat Shows

Once again this year, FFF attended the Carolina SophistiCats Cat Show held at the Cabarrus Arena and Events Center on February 11 & 12. The cat show was well-attended in spite of the rain and cold weather.

We asked our volunteers to bake some goodies...brownies, cookies, candies, etc. We also had cat related items to sell. The response was terrific, and as a result, we raised more money at this show than any other!



On April 1 & 2, FFF again set up our information table to sell our traditional homemade goodies and cat-related items at the Cat Fanciers' Association Southern Crafty Cat Show, held at the Charlotte Merchandise Mart. We also received a wonderful response for this show and were able to raise additional funds for local feral cats.



Remember to look for our information table at area cat shows and other pet-related events. Stop by for information on spay/neuter of feral cats, or just to show your support for our cause.

Thanks to everyone who baked items or donated their time to work at our information table. We could not have been this successful without your help!

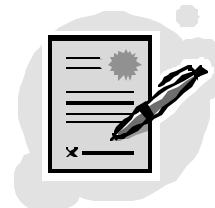
Friends of Feral Felines Rescue Network Principles

1. Only bring into your care those animals which you can afford to care for in a humane and clean environment with shelter, food, and water.
2. Only bring into your care those which you can afford veterinary service, which should include spay/neuter and rabies vaccination.
3. Practice proper quarantine of new animals brought into your care.
4. Try not to turn away a homeless animal, but instead work through the network of fellow rescuers (this does not always include peoples' pets).
5. Principles before personalities. Political views are not a part of this network. The network's only concern is the care of homeless animals.
6. If anyone has a problem with any of these principles at any time, they are to ask network members for support.
7. The network is run on the honor and trust of those who take part. The services provided within the network go directly to the animals, not the caregiver.
8. It is recommended that all rescuers get a pre-expo-

Ways to Make a Difference

Many of you have asked us about ways you can support Friends of Feral Felines and increase funding for our TNR (Trap-Neuter-vaccinate-Release) program to help local feral cats.

♦ Ask your Human Resources department if your company offers a matching gift program. We have several individuals who participate in this program, which usually doubles the amount they contribute, many times conveniently through payroll deduction.



♦ Make provisions for a gift through your will or trust.

♦ Tribute Gifts are a thoughtful way to celebrate the memory of or to honor a person or an animal.

♦ Make a donation in a friend, family member, or co-worker's name for a birthday or holiday gift.

♦ Remember FFF when making charity donations during the holidays or throughout the year.

♦ Volunteer your time or special skills to help FFF with our fundraising efforts. New ideas for fundraisers are always welcome.



100% of all donations received by FFF go directly toward spaying and neutering local feral cats.

sure rabies shot.

9. Friends of Feral Felines provides free loan of humane traps and recovery carriers, an excellent low-cost veterinary network, and step-by-step verbal and typed instructions on Trap/Neuter/Return of homeless feral cats.

10. Friends of Feral Felines meetings are held every other month. Please consult our hotline, 704-348-1578, or our website, www.friendsofferalfelines.org, for details on time and place. Volunteers are not required to attend meetings in order to participate in network.

FFF Wish List

- ♦ **Urgent need** for landowners or farm owners willing to accept feral cats in need of relocation
- ♦ Light colored towels for use at our clinics
- ♦ Medium to large pet carriers to be used for post-surgery recovery of feral cats
- ♦ Donations of dry or canned cat food
- ♦ Volunteers for feral cat trapping teams at UNCC and Myers Park, as well as North, South, East, and West Charlotte

Feral Feature: Annabelle's Tail

By Terri McGirt

One night in April 2003, I stepped outside to go for my nightly walk and there in my front yard, hiding behind a tree, was a gorgeous calico cat. She would keep her body behind the tree, but keep her head poked over to the side (I think she thought she was hiding and couldn't be seen!). I went back in and got her a bowl of food, set it as close to her as I could, and left for my walk.

When I returned, the food was gone, but she was hiding behind a car in the driveway. I watched her for awhile and talked to her, but when I tried to approach her, she ran. She did, however, not venture far, and she always came back.

I started leaving her some food in the driveway each night, and I gradually moved it up the sidewalk, eventually ending up on the bottom step of my front porch. This was when our nightly sessions began. Every night I would sit on the porch and talk to her while she ate, and she began to stay longer and longer. I would spend an hour or so talking with her every night. I longed to pet her and show her how much love I could give her. She became my therapist/counselor. I had lost my mom in December 2002, and she provided me with a much-



Annabelle

needed outlet to just talk and talk. She probably saved me a fortune!

This went on for several months, and I slowly began moving her food bowl up the steps. Eventually she ended up one step from my feet. She was a very beautiful cat- a very colorful calico- with a very distinctive black triangle on her

nose. She had stolen my heart. She began to love me also and would watch my front door. When I opened it, she would come running from wherever she was! My husband jokingly said that she was stalking me!

I finally got to touch her in November of 2003. She just about jumped out of her skin the first time, but she must have liked it because she came back for more. Gradually, she loved to be loved on. There was a catch, however, she would only let me touch her on my front porch.

We were scheduled to go on vacation to the Keys in December, and I remember absolutely not wanting to leave. Annabelle showed up for her food every night while I was gone, and our pet sitter said she would eat and quickly retreat to the tree she used to hide behind. It was a happy reunion the night I returned home. She had never rubbed her head and cheeks against me so much.

One day, in the Spring of 2004, I was talking to a neighbor and telling her about Annabelle. She mentioned Mary Ralston's name to me and thought that Annabelle had once belonged to her. I made up my mind to speak to Mary the next time I saw her outside.

One day, a week or so later, I introduced myself to

Mary and told her about Annabelle. She said she thought that it sounded like a cat she used to have named Callie. She brought me a picture, and sure enough, it was Callie...her "lost cat."



Annabelle

Mary and I began talking about our love for cats, plants, and loads of other things and she became one of my very best friends. All those years we lived just down the road from each other, and all it took was one precious former feral feline to bring us together. I offered to repay Mary for the expenses she had incurred with Annabelle, but being the gracious person she is, she of course refused. Friends of Feral Felines are wonderful people.

Annabelle has since brought to my doorstep another cat who I named Cooper, which is another story...

Feral Angels Spay/Neuter Clinic Update

Friends of Feral Felines continued our efforts with another year of our Feral Angels high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter clinics for unowned feral cats by kicking off our first clinic of 2006 on March 26. At this clinic, our volunteers and veterinary professionals worked to spay/neuter 34 feral cats, most of which were female.

April 22 marked our twentieth clinic since starting the Feral Angels Clinics in 2003! 22 cats were spayed or neutered at this clinic, including 10 males and 12 females. Two additional cats brought in to our clinic had already been spayed, unbeknownst to their current caretakers.



Volunteers Cleaning Cats' Ears

In addition to the dedicated veterinarians who generously volunteered their time and services, we would also like to thank the following volunteers who helped to make these two clinics a success: Lynne Banker, Brandi



Feral Cat at March 2006 Clinic

Barker, Krystal Brantly, Annette Collins, Allyson Crunkleton, Ruby Davis, Kim Earp, Shannon Emory, Valerie and Race Farlow, Char Fobell, Ann-Marie Gearhart, Liz Grainger, Ann Gross, Cindy Henderson, Bill Laudati, Carol Martin, April McCune, Allison McLean, Jenny Moesta,

Michelle Nedopak, Al Rich, Beverly Sammarco, Lisa Steffy, Ellen Thomas, Brenda Thrasher, Lenore Tripp, Tammy Wilson, Alice Woods, and Donna Yankoglu.



Feral FAQ's

If I contact FFF, will you trap the feral cats in my area and take them for me?

The FFF hotline (704-348-1578) is fairly busy year round, but in the early spring and summer, it can average 17 or more calls per day! Some callers have worked with us for a few years, some find new colonies and want to know about trap/neuter/return (TNR), and some find new cats have integrated their colonies and want to get them spayed or neutered right away. Callers find out about us from neighbors, co-workers, area vet offices, our website, and by visiting our table at cat shows and pet expos. Most of the people we talk to share a mutual concern of TNR of the cats so they can live a healthier life and are anxious to help the cats, but some people have a pre-conceived notion that WE come out to where the cat(s) is located, trap it, take it to the vet, recover it, and release it. Others call and think we come and take the cat(s) away and relocate it to a farm. Then, there is always the threat of "If you don't come and take this cat, I'll have to call Animal Control." Some people even ask if we will supply a trap so they can take the cat to Animal Control! A caller once said she saw several cats where she worked. She knew they were reproducing but she said she "didn't have time to get them fixed."

With the exception of supplying a trap to take a cat to Animal Control, FFF is more than willing to assist with the TNR process. Unfortunately, we do not have enough volunteers to go out and do the work for you. It's so easy to think "Someone else will take care of the problem if I don't," but that's not the case. Please be proactive and take the initiative to help feral cats that you see. Commitment is difficult sometimes, but the reward is knowing you have prevented a cat from reproducing, had it vaccinated for rabies and, in some cases, had it tested for feline aids or leukemia. We're not asking that you go looking for cats, but if you see them around or if one or more are in your yard, call us and we will guide you step-by-step in the TNR process. One of the biggest mistakes you can make is thinking you are helping a cat by feeding it but not getting it spayed or neutered. An unbelievable number of kittens will be born in the coming months. Rescue groups and foster caretakers will be overwhelmed. Help reduce the kitten population by taking small steps...and make the first one by calling our hotline!


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A Cat's Tale
Friends of Feral Felines
P O Box 473385
Charlotte, NC 28247
704-348-1578
www.friendsofferalfelines.org



In Memory Of

Lucille Curtis, Mother of Mary Ann Curtis, by Mary Ann's Health Department friends
Ethelene Sneed, by Brenda Thrasher
David Sammarco, by Theresa Gahren
Mr. Bearcat, by Billie Crisp
Pearl & Jazzy, by Marti French
Danni Girl, by Beverly Sammarco
Sweet Molly, by Beverly Sammarco
Hugh, pet of Ann-Marie Gearhart, by her friends at FFF
Missy, pet of Bill Laudati, by his friends at FFF
 **In Honor Of**
Colleen Crittenden, by Barry Gilmore and Patricia Burbank
If you care to have your loved ones honored, please consider making a donation to Friends of Feral Felines in honor of or in memory of their name.

Events Calendar



Wed, June 7 (date change to Wednesday!), and Tues, Aug 1 - FFF General Meetings, 6:30 pm at Morrison Regional Library, Colony Road (South Park). New members are always welcome!
May 5 - AARF 2nd Annual Animal Expo, 11:30 am - 1:30 pm, Founder's Hall, Bank of America Corporate Center. FFF will have an information table at this event.
May 25-27 - Food Lion Speed Street, Uptown Charlotte. FFF will raise funds through a beverage stand. Volunteers needed to help work FFF beverage stand.
Month of June - FFF volunteers will be selling car wash tickets for the Autobell car wash on Polk Street in Pineville as a fundraiser.
Please check our website or call our hotline for more details and confirmation of all event dates and locations.