

Guidelines for trapping a cat in urban and peri-urban areas

General information

In Tasmania, under the *Cat Management Act 2009*, property owners and occupiers are permitted to trap a cat found on their property. If you set a trap, you must be aware of your responsibilities, in particular in relation to the welfare of any animal caught in a trap. You are required to check the trap at least once every 24-hour period after first setting the trap. If a cat has been trapped, the cat must either be returned to its owner, or arrangements must be made for the cat to be taken to a cat management facility or a nominee of a facility, within 24 hours of being trapped.



This document provides guidelines for trapping on your own property. A person cannot under any circumstances enter another person's property, public or reserved land to trap a cat without the owner or manager of the land's permission.

Things to consider before deciding to trap a cat

- Have you exhausted all other avenues to address the problem? (For example, have you tried communicating with the cat's owner about their cat entering your property?)
- Have you advised your neighbours through a letterbox drop that you intend to trap any cats that roam onto your property? This is not required by legislation but is considered good practice. Visit www.tassiecat.com for more information and templates for neighbourhood letters.
- Have you been in contact with a cat management facility about your intention to set a trap, and is the facility willing to accept a trapped cat?
- Are you able to check the trap at least once, but preferably twice a day?
- Are you able to safely transport the cat by car to a cat management facility within 24 hours of it being trapped?



Under the *Animal Welfare Act 1993*, if you set a trap you are automatically deemed to be responsible for the care of any animal caught in the trap and have a duty to take all reasonable measures to ensure the welfare of any animal caught in the trap.

Before you start trapping

What are you going to do with the cat once you have trapped it?

A trapped cat must either be returned to its owner, or arrangements have to be made for the cat to be taken to a cat management facility, or a nominee of a facility, within 24 hours of the cat being trapped.

Contact your local cat management facility

Before setting a trap, you should contact your local cat management facility to understand the facility's procedures for accepting a cat, operating hours, and any associated fees.

Cat management facilities are not-for-profit organisations and operate on public donations and other fundraising activities. They may request a fee when you hand in a cat. It is very important to consider this information before deciding to trap a cat.

You should not take a cat to a cat management facility without having contacted the facility first.

Traps

Only use (treadle/foot pad style) wire cage traps, with dimensions of at least 66cm x 25cm x 23cm.

Do not use cage traps which have a hook for holding food/meat as these can injure a cat, or any other animal unintentionally caught, once it has been trapped, especially if the cat is wearing a collar. Do not use leg-hold or body-grip traps or snares – these are illegal in Tasmania and their use can result in prosecution.



'Treadle-style' cage trap with a lure tied at the back and a small 'taster' at the front. Photo courtesy of Sue Robinson NRE Tasmania.

Setting a trap

Place the cage in an area where the cat likes to visit. Setting the trap within two hours of dusk is recommended. Make sure the cage will not be exposed to direct sunlight (remembering that the position of the shade will change throughout the day), not positioned near an ant nest, and out of the way of livestock that might displace the trap. The trap should be out of sight of visitors or passers-by that might interfere with the trap. If you have a pet, such as a dog, consider this when setting a trap and make sure your own pet cannot interfere with the trap or harass any animal that is trapped.

Make sure the cage is on flat ground and that stones or vegetation will not obstruct the door. Ensure the trap is stable (either pegged to the ground or with a rock/log placed on either side of the outside of the cage) to prevent the mechanism from shutting accidentally and to prevent the cage from rolling over once a cat is trapped. Place the cage alongside an object, such as a fence or log, or under a bush as cats are reluctant to enter a trap that is out in the open.

It is best to avoid setting traps in extreme weather such as very wet, hot or cold conditions, as this has the potential to cause welfare issues and stress for any animal that may be trapped. It is preferable to have the back half of the cage covered with a hessian bag to protect the cat, or any other animal unintentionally trapped, from the elements and to help keep it calm. The cover should be secured to prevent it from flapping in the wind as this may scare away the cat.

Before adding a lure to the trap, test the treadle plate mechanism to make sure the cage closes quickly and completely, and the locking bar slides down easily.



'Treadle-style' cage trap with back half covered with a hessian bag. Photo courtesy of Sue Robinson NRE Tasmania.

Lure

You can use a variety of foods to attract or 'lure' a cat into a cage such as boneless cooked chicken, tuna and wet cat food. Place a small amount of food just inside the cage to entice the cat inside and place a larger quantity at the back of the cage behind the treadle plate.

Tie the lure to the back of the cage. Wet cat food and tuna can be tied in a clean chux cloth or gauze and tied to the back of the cage. Tying the lure to the back of the cage will mean that the cat will not be able to reach across the treadle plate without activating the trap.

Make sure the lure is fresh and replace it every second day, or daily in hot conditions.

Using a poisoned lure is illegal under the *Animal Welfare Act 1993* and could result in prosecution.

Checking the trap

Once the lure has been added, the trap mechanism can be set. By law, the trap must be checked at least once every 24 hours. However, checking twice a day, once early in the morning and once at dusk, is recommended. The trap can be closed during the day to avoid other animals being trapped.

Once you have trapped a cat

Once a cat has been trapped, secure the closed doors with cable-ties and move the trap to a quiet location protected from the elements. Cover the cage entirely with a hessian bag or blanket while awaiting transport. This will help keep the cat calm.

Always use thick leather gloves when handling a cage with a trapped animal inside to avoid getting scratched. Even if the trapped cat is obviously a pet cat, take care, as pet cats can injure people when stressed.

If you have trapped a native animal, you must release it as soon as practicable, but no later than 24 hours after first setting the trap. You need to release it either where it was trapped or in a suitably safe, vegetated area. Face the cage door away from yourself before opening the door to release the animal. If the animal appears injured, contact your local vet or wildlife carer.

NOTE: If you have trapped a declared pest animal (e.g. ferret or fox), you should contact Biosecurity Tasmania for advice (T: 03 6165 3777).

If you have trapped a cat, you must either return the cat to its owner or arrange for the cat to be taken to a cat management facility, or a nominee of a facility, within 24 hours of the cat being trapped.

If the cat is to be taken to a cat management facility, you should call the facility first to let them know you have trapped a cat. They will ask some questions and provide advice. An injured cat may need to be taken to the nearest vet. It is recommended you talk to the cat management facility prior to setting a trap to make sure they are able to take the cat when trapped.

The breeding season for cats in Tasmania stretches from October to April. It is important to note that any female cat trapped during this period could have dependent kittens. If you can locate the kittens, they should be taken to the cat management facility along with the mother.

Transporting a trapped cat

Transport the cat in the trap, with the doors secured. If possible, it is recommended to secure the trap in the storage area of a vehicle (but not the enclosed boot of a car) or in the tray of a utility vehicle (ute). It is important that the trap is placed in an area where there is good air circulation and the area is free of objects that could damage the trap or injure the cat. This is to prevent or minimise safety issues such as the cat escaping from the cage or disease transfer via urine or other matter.

If you do have to transport the trapped cat inside a car, extra precautions should be taken to minimise the risk of disease transmission. To protect the upholstery from any possible mess you should put a tarp or plastic sheet under the cage. Once you have taken the cat to a cat management facility the tarp can be easily removed and cleaned or disposed of. Check that the trap doors are tied securely with cable-ties. If a cat were to escape from a trap inside a car it could create a very dangerous situation.

The trap should be secured to prevent sliding or rolling. To minimise stress during transport, keep the cage covered with a hessian bag or blanket and keep noise to a minimum.

Cats and disease

Cats carry parasites and diseases which can be transmitted to people, livestock, native animals and other cats. One such parasite, *Toxoplasma gondii*, can result in miscarriage and foetal abnormalities in pregnant women. Pregnant women should not trap or handle a trapped cat.

Traps must be cleaned after catching a cat to minimise the risk of disease transfer. Wearing appropriate gloves, use a hose with good pressure to remove faeces and other matter. Avoid using disinfectant, especially those with phenols, as these can deter cats from approaching a trap. The trap should be dried before use.

Cat management facilities in Tasmania

Ten Lives Cat Centre

Hobart
www.tenlives.com.au
T: 03 6278 2111

Just Cats Tasmania

Mowbray
www.justcats.org.au
T: 03 6388 9202

RSPCA

Spreyton, Launceston and Hobart
www.rspcatas.org.au
T: 03 6709 8100



For more info visit: www.tassiecat.com

