

Cats prey upon a wide range of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and insects. Although cage trapping is considered an ineffective tool for large areas, it may be useful in urban/residential areas where domestic cats are present, or where populations have already been reduced and individual cats need to be targeted.

In urban/residential areas, cage traps are preferred to be used and non-target animals can be released unharmed and trapped cats can be transported away from the area to SPCA.

This standard operating procedure (SOP) is a guide only; it does not replace or override the legislation.

Application

- Trapping of cats can be time consuming. Placements of cat traps to be located near cats breeding areas.
- Cats are naturally cautious animals and can be reluctant to enter the enclosed space of a cage trap. Also, if food sources are readily available they may not be hungry enough to approach a baited trap.
- Traps have the potential to cause significant suffering and distress so should only be used when there is no suitable alternative.
- Every effort must be made to avoid target and non-target deaths from factors such as exposure or shock.
- Place a food source inside the cage to attract the cats into the trap.
- Ensure there are no other food sources in the facility.
- Before relocating a trapped cat it must first be established that it is a feral cat, rather than a domestic pet or stray cat. Look for a collar and identification/ registration tag and scan for a microchip.
- It is recommended that the public be notified before commencement of a cat trapping program so that they can take action to protect their domestic cats if close to residential area. Trapping is most effective at night, so, if cat owners follow recommendations to keep their cats confined between dusk and dawn, the chance of trapping owned cats will be minimised.

Animal welfare considerations

Impact on target animals

- Cats are likely to suffer distress from being confined in a cage trap and they can sometimes be injured while trying to escape. Facial injuries are common.
- Traps must be inspected daily to prevent suffering and possible death from exposure, dehydration, starvation and/or shock.
- Captured animals must be approached carefully and quietly to reduce panic, further stress and risk of injury.
- If a trapped cat is taken to the SPCA, it is recommended to place a blanket over the cage to avoid any future visual distress. Cats should not be transported in the back of a vehicles trunk.

Impact on non-target animals

- Traps are not target specific, therefore other species such as birds and reptiles may be caught.
Traps must not be set near areas that are regularly frequented by non-target species.
- Live non-target animals caught in traps must be examined for injuries and signs of illness or distress and dealt with as follows:
- Animals which are unharmed or have only received minimal injuries such as minor cuts or abrasions should be immediately released at the site of capture.
- Animals which have more severe injuries or which are suffering from thermal stress should receive appropriate attention. An animal suffering from thermal stress can initially be placed in a suitable quiet holding area which provides warmth or shade to allow recovery before release. Animals with treatable injuries that cannot be immediately released or those failing to recover from thermal stress should be presented to a veterinarian or a registered wildlife carer for treatment.
- If a domestic pet is caught, it should be taken to the nearest animal shelter, council pound or veterinarian where it can be scanned for a microchip and the owner contacted, or assessed as to suitability for re-homing.

Equipment required

Traps

- Cat Cages that can be obtained from Pest Store.

Attractant

- A variety of baits may be used to lure cats into the trap. Attractants include, cat food, tuna oil, Meat bats and also soiled cat litter from a cattery.
- Meat bait has a strong odour.
- A handful of meat bait is placed at the rear of the cage.
- Capture efficiency may be improved by using bait that reflects the cat's staple prey for the area rather than being novel.

Procedures

Selection of trap sites.

- The location of all trap sites must be accurately recorded. This information should be readily available to others in case the trapper is unable to return to check the traps.
- Do not place traps in areas where they may be interfered with /damaged by large stock or humans.

Placing and setting the trap

- Before setting each trap ensure that it is functioning properly.
- The trap should be pegged to the ground to prevent the cat or some other animal from tipping it over and injuring itself and/or releasing the trap door.
- Place meat baits inside the trap and lures in suitable positions inside and outside of the trap.
Cage traps should be clear of vegetation so that the cat can walk completely around the trap before entering.
- If traps need to be left open during the day, they should be checked again in late afternoon.