

To the Rescue

Feral cats are wily and often difficult to trap. An experienced cat lover shares tips on how to trap a feral cat.

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Many cat lovers have seen cats that need help, but have had difficulty winning their trust. Becky Robinson, an Alley Cat Allies director in Maryland, recommends what she calls a basic recipe for trapping a feral cat.

"If you are feeding the cat," Robinson said, "establish a pattern of feeding at the same time and same place for five to seven days. Cats are creatures of habit and catch on quickly."

Robinson suggested obtaining a humane trap in which to catch the cat. You can obtain a humane trap through your local humane organization or shelter, but you might be required to bring the cat to them once you've caught it, so Robinson recommended checking with them first for any obligations you might incur if you use one of their traps.

Place the trap in the same spot where you have been leaving food. Put the food inside the trap and set it. Leave a trail of food going into the trap to increase the chances that the cat will enter. Stay far away so the cat will not see you or be frightened off.

"We don't recommend that you leave," Robinson said. Trapped cats are vulnerable, so check the trap every 15 minutes or so. As you approach the trap, use a towel or blanket to cover it and calm the cat.

"Before you trap the cat, make plans with your veterinarian," Robinson said. She recommends not handling the cat until it is anesthetized. Have the cat tested for contagious diseases. If you are considering adopting the cat, it may be necessary to confine it for a time until it becomes accustomed to your presence.