



## BEST FRIENDS CATNIPPERS

### Post-Surgery Information for Caretakers

By bringing cats here today for sterilization, you have helped lessen the burden of cat overpopulation. Your cats were given a long acting injection of anesthetic for today's surgery. Many cats will have only partially recovered from anesthesia at the time of discharge since full recovery may take 24 hours. Since the clinic facilities are loaned to us, we cannot supervise the aftercare of the cats. Consequently, the caretakers need to monitor the cats for 24 hours following discharge in order to provide the best care possible for the cats.

#### **IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS:**

- The discharge coordinator will inform you of each cat's status and any special instructions or medications. Please make sure you understand any special instructions concerning post-surgery treatment.
- Cats will still be recovering from anesthesia when you pick them up. General anesthesia will cause cats (**ESPECIALLY KITTENS**) to become hypothermic (low body temperature). It is imperative that they be kept in a warm, draft-free environment during their recovery. Keep their traps or carriers covered. If in a trap, elevate trap slightly on bricks or wooden slats (so urine and feces can fall through), and set on newspaper.
- Please keep the cats in their traps until at least the next morning. This provides protection and security. This is essential for the safety of all cats, including nursing cats with kittens. Until fully awake, do not disturb them by reaching into the trap - they often overreact and may bite!
- **Offer food and water only when the cat is fully awake. See "Feeding Instructions" below.**
- Monitor cats periodically. Stitches are absorbable and do not need to be removed. During kitten season, lactating females should be released within 24 hours of trapping. They will still be able to nurse the kittens after surgery. If you have any concerns about the recovery of the cat from the time of discharge Sunday to release on Monday, please call our hotline number – (818) 377-9700 – and explain your situation. Our volunteer staff can often address questions, and can refer you to appropriate veterinary care. Please do not call the clinic location under any circumstances. If a cat has a situation that you feel cannot wait for assistance from Best Friends Catnippers, please call your local pet emergency clinic. The fees for care at a veterinary clinic are the responsibility of the caretakers, not Best Friends Catnippers.
- **Normal** behaviors that occur during recovery include deep sleep, head bobbing, wobbly movements, fast breathing, and shivering. No cat should be released the next day if it has these signs.
- **Abnormal** behaviors during recovery include continued bleeding from the surgery area. Bleeding from the left ear crop may occur, but should stop by the time of release the next day.

## FEEDING INSTRUCTIONS

### GENERAL INFORMATION

It is important to remember that while the Trap/Neuter/Return program is critical to the ultimate well being of the cats we treat, and to prevent needless suffering, the process is very stressful for them. Part of the stress involves the lengthy period of time that some of the cats go without food. For example, if trapping is to be done on a Saturday night, food is usually withheld from the colony Friday night to help improve the odds of successful trapping, and the cats will be very hungry when they wake up. Surgery is done on Sunday and the cats are released on Monday morning. Many times the released cats do not show up at the feeding station until 1-2 days later. This means that some cats go without food for **4-5 days** (Thursday evening through Monday or Tuesday). While it is very important to withhold food prior to trapping to insure success, food should be offered to the trapped cats as outlined below.

Please remember, feeding instructions are different for the two basic categories of cats: (1) Kittens up to 4 – 5 months old, and (2) cats older than this.

### PRE-SURGERY FEEDING INSTRUCTIONS

#### Kittens:

**Kittens cannot go without food as long as adult cats can.** Kittens should not go without food longer than 6-8 hours prior to surgery because their blood sugar level will get too low. For the youngest kittens (8-12 weeks) no more than 3-4 hours is preferable. Trapped kittens should be offered canned food and water the night before surgery. If canned food is not available, dry food can be used, but water **must** be made available. You can leave the food and water in the trap all night but the **FOOD NEEDS TO BE REMOVED BY NO LATER THAN 7:00 A.M. ON THE DAY OF SURGERY.** Be sure to remove all water and food before transporting.

#### Adults:

Adults should be offered canned or dry food and water after being trapped, but **ALL FOOD NEEDS TO BE REMOVED BY MIDNIGHT.** You should leave the water in all night, and make sure to remove it before transporting.

#### Feeding Techniques:

If the trap has a back door, the food can be placed on a piece of newspaper long enough to slide under the door and have the end that is in your hand stay outside the trap. This makes it easier to remove any uneaten food when you need to. Or, it can be placed on a flat plate. **ONLY OPEN THE DOOR 2 INCHES AT THE MOST, AND KEEP THE FOOD AND WATER NEAR THE DOOR OPENING TO FACILITATE REMOVAL.** The water can be offered in an empty cat food can, or a container of similar height, and can also be slid under the door opening. If the trap does not have a back door, then the trap door can be opened partially and the food and water slid in. **BE CAREFUL, AND DO NOT RISK ALLOWING THE CAT TO ESCAPE.**

Remember that the trap needs to be covered at all times. The cats will want to stay at the back of the covered trap – away from you. Very rarely, however, a cat will rush the opening and try to get out. **REMEMBER – DO NOT OPEN THE TRAP DOOR MORE THAN 2 INCHES AND NEVER REACH INSIDE!** If you are the least bit unsure about opening the trap door, then just drop the food through the top of the trap nearest either end. The drawback about this method is that it will be more difficult to

remove the food. Do your best to remove the food if you end up dropping it in. A flat stick can be used to scrape the food out if necessary as long as there is a back door. Be careful when using a stick under the trap door because if the cat rushes the door, the stick will prevent the door from locking. **Be sure to have a firm grip on the door** if you use this procedure.

Canned food is 78% water, so it is preferable to use it instead of dry food, particularly if water is not available. If the food bowls have been moved around, do not risk your safety or allowing the cat to escape by reaching in. You can use a stick pushed under the back door to move the containers/plates/newspaper closer to you. Or, you can just gently and slowly rotate the trap so that the food and water falls out. This latter method will, however, cause more stress on the cat.

### **POST-SURGERY:**

After the cat/kitten is sufficiently awake, canned and dry food and water should be offered. This is usually sometime between 6:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m., depending on the cat, but this time frame can vary greatly. If you are uneasy about opening the trap to put in food and water, try dropping canned food through the top of the trap. It is optimal to have the cats released with a full stomach, which will aid in their recovery and ultimately reduce the stress on them. Don't be surprised if the cat will not eat in a trap – only 50% to 60% of cats will. But at least we can try!

**Once again, if you are unsure about opening the trap, then just drop the food through the top of the trap nearest either end.**

### **TEMPERATURE REMINDER:**

One other very important point to keep in mind is temperature. General anesthesia causes animals, **especially kittens**, to become hypothermic. It is imperative that they be kept in a **warm, draft-free environment while in your care during recovery.**

### **RELEASING THE CATS:**

If the cats are fully awake the next day, they may be released back to their colony. If the cat is not yet fully awake or is bleeding please call the Best Friends Catnippers hotline number.

**Best Friends Catnippers  
Contact Information:**

P.O. Box 26, Woodland Hills, California 91365-0026  
Telephone: (818) 377-9700 [General] – (818) 377-2004 [Volunteers]  
e-mail: [info@bestfriends.org](mailto:info@bestfriends.org)