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## WHAT TO DO AFTER SURGERY

### AFTER CARE/RECOVERY:

*These are the steps to take following having a feral cat spayed or neutered.*

- Keep cats in their traps lined with clean newspaper throughout the recovery period. Only transfer to a cage the following day if they are kittens or cats you plan to socialize. Keep the trap covered with a sheet or towel at all times to help keep them calm and to reduce their stress.
- The cats will be groggy and need to sleep off the anesthesia overnight;
- Do not disturb cat by reaching into the trap – they may overreact and bite. Do not try to touch the cat;
- Hold cat(s) in a quiet indoor room, i.e. a garage or bathroom, in a comfortable environment. They are susceptible to heat and cold while recovering from the anesthesia. Kittens must be kept warm because they are vulnerable to anesthetic-related hypothermia;
- Spread a plastic liner on the floor covered with a layer of newspaper on top of it under trap in case the cat has an accident overnight;
- Kittens are usually ready to eat four to six hours after surgery. Feeding them before release is recommended to prevent hypoglycemia. Adults can be given a small amount of canned food eight hours after surgery which is easier to digest than dry food but the cat may not have an appetite. Mix a little water in with the wet food. Be careful when opening carrier or trap that the cat does not try to escape. Open the door ever so slightly - just enough to slide the can in. Keep hand out of the trap and always relock the trap door;
- Normal behaviors during recovery include: deep sleep, head bobbing, wobbly movements, fast breathing, and shivering. Bleeding from the right ear tip is expected, but should stop by the next day;
- Abnormal behaviors include continual bleeding from the surgery area, prolonged recovery time (still inactive and lethargic, 6+ hours after surgery) or getting drowsy or weak again after waking up. Contact your veterinarian;
- Your veterinarian should use dissolving sutures so that the cat does not need to return to the clinic;
- Cats can be returned to their colony site only if alert and clear eyed, barring severe, inclement weather, and the following guidelines are recommended;
  - **Release cats ONLY if they seem healthy and stable following surgery!**
  - MALES: Release next day (24 hours after surgery)
  - FEMALES: Release after 2-3 days unless they are lactating. If cat is lactating, release 24 hours after surgery. Even young kittens will survive overnight without nursing.
- Release the cat(s) at the site where they were trapped. Provide fresh water and food. The cats may disappear for a few hours or a day but they will return after they have calmed down;

Make sure you have the number of your veterinarian or a nearby emergency clinic handy in case it is needed.