

PREBAIT

Training cats to use a box trap as a feeding station

This technique is ideal for backyard cats. The more time they have to spend with the trap, look it over, live with it, the better.

Place the trap at the feeding station, the place where the cats normally feed or hang out. Securely tie the trap door open so that it cannot close. Ideally, you should leave the trap in one place, 24/7, chain it to something if you need to, and leave the only food available in it. Do not place food anywhere else but in the trap. You want all the cats to eat from the trap.

Start off with the food bowl placed in the front opening. If one or more of the cats eat from the bowl in that position, move it further into the trap at the next feeding. If they don't touch the food in 24 hours, you may need to start the bowl just outside the trap. You may also need tastier food.

If there is no food anywhere else but in the trap, the cats' choice is to either go in the trap and eat or go hungry. In time, one or more of the cats will get up the nerve to try it out. That cat will demonstrate to the others that it's safe. The cats can take turns eating in the trap; they don't have to all eat at once.

Once they're comfortable with eating from the bowl, at the next feeding, place it closer to the back of the trap. You don't need to wait until all are eating before moving it.

Once they're all eating from the back of the trap, you're ready to untie the door so that it can close, and set your traps! Be sure to cover the traps with a large towel.

Tough love. They will be happier and safer once they are spayed than they ever have been in their thanks to you, their caretaker.

Try the Bottle Trick

You may need to pick out a particular cat to trap first, such as a female, or perhaps several of the cats already have been eartipped and you'll want to trap only the cats that are intact still. You can control the trap and pick out the cat you want while still allowing the other cats to eat happily and without alarming them. In order to do this, you want to control the boxtrap's door.



Find a soda bottle that's the right height to prop open the trap door. Get 30-50 feet of twine or cord that will not stretch and tie it around the neck of the bottle.

Prop the trap door open with the bottle taking up as little of the opening as you can.

Put a bowl of food at the back of the trap, and, taking string in hand, back off as far as you need to so that the cats no longer take notice of you. You may be able to sit in your house or car, with a view of the trap. Ideally, you should be in a position where you're looking at the side of the trap, and somewhat to the rear of it. In this position, a cat eating from the trap will not be "tipped off" by seeing you move to yank the cord. Take up any slack in the cord, now. Wait for your target cat to eat. Other cats may eat first, but you can catch them later. Your target cat may back out of the trap, but she will come back. You want her rear end to be 6 or 8" inside the trap, and let her settle. Give her time to stop looking around and to put her face in the food, and then YANK the cord.