

• Winter trapping

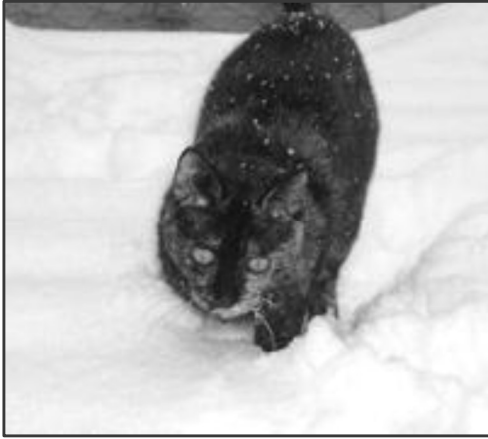


photo: Bryan Kortis

Some trappers in northern climates don't like to trap during the winter because the females have their stomachs shaved for the spay/neuter surgery and lose some protection against the cold. They also believe, in general, that frigid temperatures and conditions are too hard on the cats for them to be TNR'ed in those conditions. Neighborhood Cats is based in New York City with its northeastern climate and we actually prefer trapping in the wintertime. The cats' coats thicken up in the autumn and they're prepared to handle the cold. There are far fewer pregnancies, almost no kittens or nursing mothers to deal with, and fixing the cats over

the winter gets you a big step ahead of the spring kitten season. However, we will only trap during the cold season if we know the cats have warm, dry shelter. As long as they have a good place to bed down in, our experience is they do perfectly fine after being fixed and released. If we're not sure they have adequate housing, we'll place shelters out into the cats' territory before any trapping begins. Only if we can't place shelters out and are unsure whether the cats have a good place to stay warm, will we hold back from trapping.

Other winter preparations include making sure there is plenty of fresh straw stuffed into the shelters and, if possible, placing the shelters close to the feeding station so the cats won't have to travel far in the cold. It also helps to ask your veterinarian to minimize the amount of fur shaved off a female's belly.

During the trapping, ensure both trapped cats and yourself have quick access to a warm space at all times, even if it's your car. You may need to use dry food in addition to, or instead of, your favorite bait because any kind of moist food will quickly freeze in low temperatures. Likewise, you may need to replenish your bait more frequently than in warmer conditions. After the surgeries, if there may be a sudden snowstorm or unexpected snap of bitter cold, be prepared to delay the release of the cats back outside for a couple of days.

One other advantage if you're trapping in the snow is the cats' paw prints become visible. You can literally see the paths they travel and place your traps accordingly.



photo: Bryan Kortis

Source: Neighborhood Cats TNR Handbook 2nd Edition