

The following recommendations are for your own personal safety while working in the field.

When leaving your vehicle:

- Always park your car facing out so you can leave quickly if necessary.
- Always lock your car and carry your keys on you.
- Don't leave any valuables visible in your car (even spare change).

What to carry:

- Gloves
- Two-way radio (if available)
- High-powered headlight or flashlight
- Air horn (if available)
- Cell phone, which should be kept secure in a zippered pocket or bag

What to wear:

- Bright, easily-visible colored shirts with Best Friends logo (no dark shirts)
- Long pants
- Closed-toe shoes, such as tennis shoes or boots with thick soles
- Reflective clothing or vest for night work
- Wear layers and bring weather-appropriate gear.
- Do not wear expensive or valuable clothing or accessories, including items like sunglasses or jewelry (that you wouldn't want damaged or lost).

Trapping and communication tips:

- Work with a partner whenever possible.
- Check in with staff every 30-45 minutes via text or phone and anytime you move to a different location. Failure to check in could result in staff contacting the police department because of concern for your safety.
- Keep the phone number of the local animal control contact handy at all times.
- If a person or animal is acting aggressively (including dogs in the neighborhood) or you feel unsafe at any time, leave the area immediately. Call the police or animal control if appropriate.

Situational awareness tips:

- Continuously monitor the 360-degree area around you in a relaxed, but alert manner.
- "Watch your six" is a term used to remind you to always be aware of what's behind you. It's not just about what's in front of you.
- Before, during and after trapping, make sure to walk the area and keep an eye out for loose dogs, dogs reacting at fence lines, unsecured fencing with dogs behind it (broken or jerry-built areas), as well as potentially confrontational or aggressive people.

When handling traps:

- Only use humane box traps to trap feral cats.
- Always carry traps by their handles.
- Ensure that trap doors are secured until you are ready to return or release the cat.
- Never stick your fingers through the trap holes or interact with the cats.
- Never attempt to pick up a feral cat or try to put them in a carrier or trap.
- Always use gloves (provided for all volunteers) when handling traps.

*No matter how nice cats may seem, attempting to handle feral cats will frighten them and cause them unnecessary stress, which could provoke biting or scratching.

How to ensure the cats' safety and comfort:

- Keep all cats in a temperature-controlled area.
- Only transport trapped cats in a closed vehicle such as a van, SUV or truck with a camper shell. Never transport cats in the open bed of a truck.
- Ensure trap doors are secure until you are ready to release the cats from the traps.
- Immediately notify staff of any injured cats.
- Stay quiet, calm and conscious of the cats' well-being at all times.

Cats will not communicate their needs if they are hurt, frightened or in pain. If distressed, they likely will thrash about in their traps or shut down and huddle in the corner of the trap.

Final reminders:

- Immediately notify staff if you are bitten, scratched or injured in any way while volunteering. We are required to complete an injury report on any incident of biting or scratching, but such reports will not negatively affect a cat.
- Make sure to review the "Volunteer door hanger guidelines" and the "Conflict management and resolution tips" documents.