

Canine Catch-Neuter-Return (CNR) Good Practice Guides

Catching techniques for Catch Neuter Return

Learning Outcomes:

1. Explain why hand-catching is recommended for both the dog and the community when catching dogs for a CNR programme
2. Relate the importance of accurate record keeping to dog welfare and the community

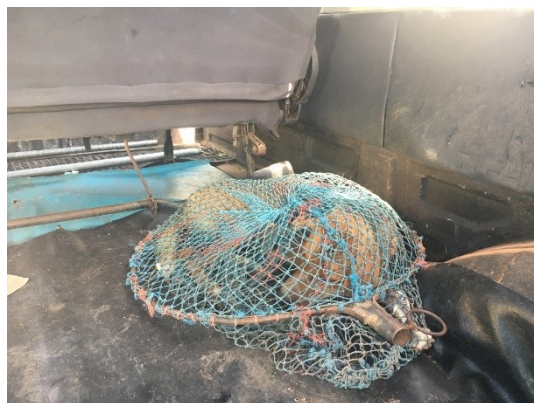
In order for dogs to be brought to the clinic to be neutered, they must be caught and then transported. In some instances, dogs may be brought to the clinic by their owner or guardian but more often the dogs are free-roaming and require the CNR staff to catch the dogs from the streets.

The priorities when dogs are caught are:

1. Staff safety
2. Minimise stress and prevent unnecessary harm to the dogs
3. Accurate record keeping
4. Improve public attitudes towards dogs

There are many different methods used for catching dogs, most of which use catching equipment. Catching is known to be stressful, as many of these free-roaming street dogs are not used to being handled and may be fearful of people due to previous negative experiences. Many CNR projects report fear and escape behaviours from dogs when capture equipment is used. The capture equipment can also cause unnecessary harm during the capture process, such as wounds, trauma, and even broken limbs.

Catching equipment is good in that it allows easy handling of the dogs when moving the dog into and out of the transportation vehicle and protects the staff when they are handling the dogs to prevent injury to the staff. This is of particular importance if the dog is suspected as being rabid as these dogs should never be handled by the staff because of the risk of a dog bite and the transmission of rabies.



A dog being safely restrained and transported in the net it was caught in.

Additional benefit is that dogs can be restrained inside them, minimising handling stress, and protecting people from potential bite injuries.

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The use of box traps is often inefficient for catching dogs. Traps are generally unsuccessful for long term dog capture as the dogs learn to avoid the traps. Catching poles or other equipment which captures the dog by the neck are not recommended as they often result in extreme panic, injury, or the dogs' airway being compromised. The use of nets can be very good for catching dogs, when used by experienced and skilled staff. However, the heavy metal ring of the net increases the risk of harm to the dog, and the toes and limbs of the dog can get tangled and injured in the net and so care must be taken to ensure that nets are appropriately constructed and repaired, and that staff are properly trained. Ideally the net should detach from the long pole/handle.

Hand catching can be a very effective method of catching dogs, and whilst it requires more initial investment in staff training, it can result in increased catching rates, compared to the catching rates when using catching equipment. This approach also encourages compassion in local staff and communities by demonstrating appropriate dog handling techniques which may result in improved attitudes towards animals. In areas where attitudes towards free-roaming dogs are already positive, the use of hand-catching may alleviate any concerns within the community around what is happening to the dogs, and whether they will be taken care of, as it demonstrates staff that are knowledgeable of dog behaviour and compassionate towards free-roaming dogs.

We recommend using hand-catching where possible for capture of dogs, in order to minimise stress and unnecessary harm to the dogs during capture, while also demonstrating good handling to the public to help improve the human-dog relationship and potentially reduce dog bite incidences. However, you must always assess the dog's behaviour and then decide how best to approach the dog and not all dogs can be hand caught. It may be that the dog is fearful of people and the CNR staff may need to spend more time within the local communities to build trust between the dog and people through feeding. But if unable to be hand caught or if it not safe to do so, and the dog is a high priority, for example a female dog in heat or a suspected rabid dog then catching equipment will need to be used.

If the dogs cannot be hand-caught, the use of properly constructed nets or sack and loop methods should be used to capture dogs.



The sack and loop method is considered the most humane if dogs cannot be caught by hand, as there is no hard equipment to injure the dog, however even with experienced staff, injuries have been recorded.

Whether using the hand-catching, sack and loop or net method, each dog must be visually evaluated before capture to ensure only dogs which meet the needs of the CNR programme are caught, for example only reproductively active or pre-pubescent dogs. Re-capture of neutered individuals and



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the capture of individuals who are not appropriate for neutering can result in unnecessary stress and harm to the dog from being caught and then released. A dog catching protocol must be written during the planning stage of the CNR programme. This protocol can then be used to train all staff involved in catching dogs and for the staff to refer to. This protocol must include which dogs should be selected, how many to be caught, and how to capture the dogs, using hand catching and also the net or sack and loop when hand-catching cannot be used. Training of staff is essential to minimise the risk of staff being harmed when catching dogs and of dogs being harmed by the catching equipment.

Lastly, there must be accurate record keeping to identify the dog and where the dog was caught so that the dog can be returned to the exact same location. Returning the dog to a different location will be stressful for that dog and could result in dogs fighting if there are already dogs living in that area. There are also negative impacts on the community if the dog is not returned, as new dogs will likely migrate into the community, and new dogs may or may not be neutered and vaccinated.

Checklist:

- ✓ Adequate staff training to ensure staff safety
- ✓ Hand catching method, net or sack and loop recommended: Minimises stress and unnecessary harm during capture, improves public attitudes towards dogs, and allows close examination of dog prior to capture
- ✓ Accurate record keeping of dog and capture location

References:

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