

FACTSHEET



Veterinary Information Feral Cat Protocol: Eartipping



Eartipping is an effective and universally accepted method to identify a spayed or neutered (and, in some cases, vaccinated) feral cat. It is the removal of the distal one-quarter of a cat's left ear, which is approximately 3/8 inch, or 1 cm, in an adult and proportionally smaller in a kitten.

This procedure is performed under sterile conditions while the cat is already anaesthetised for spay or neuter surgery. There is little or no bleeding, it is relatively painless to the cat, and the eartip does not significantly alter the appearance or beauty of the cat.

Eartipping is the preferred method to identify spayed or neutered and vaccinated feral cats, because it is difficult to get close to feral cats, and therefore the identification must be visible from a distance. Feral cats may interact with a variety of caregivers, veterinarians, and animal control personnel during their lives and so immediate visual identification is necessary to prevent an unnecessary second trapping and surgery.



No other method of identification has proven to be as safe or as effective as eartipping.

Animal Advocacy and other animal welfare groups across the country do **not** support the following methods:

- ❖ Tattooing is not effective because the tattoo is not visible until cats are trapped and anaesthetised.
- ❖ Eartags are ineffective because they can cause infection, drop off or tear cats' ears.
- ❖ Collars are not safe or practical for feral cats, because: as the cats grow and gain weight, the collars will tighten and could strangle them; the collars could get caught on something and severely injure or kill the cats; and, the collars could also fall off leaving the cats unidentified.
- ❖ Microchipping alone is not effective because it does not allow for visual identification. It is only effective once cats have been trapped and taken to a shelter or clinic that uses a scanner to find implanted microchips. It does not prevent unnecessary trapping.

Rest assured that eartipping is considered essential by experienced feral cat advocates and is endorsed by all the major animal welfare groups. This is NOT equivalent to ear cropping for cosmetic fashion in dogs.

Those who wish to pet and baby wild animals 'love' them. But those who respect their natures and wish to let them live normal lives, love them more.

~ Edwin Way Teale, Circle of the Seasons, 1953

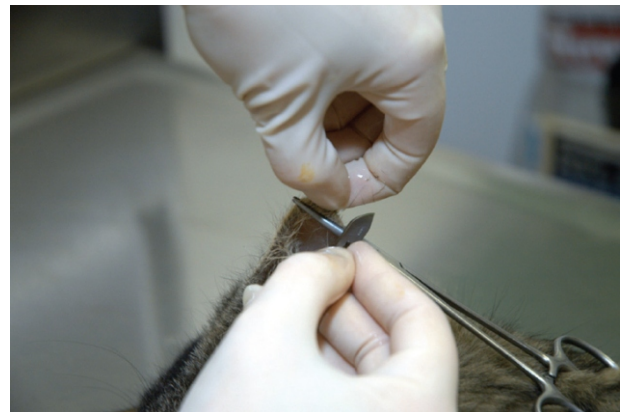
EARTIPPING INSTRUCTIONS

While the cat is still under anaesthesia, right after surgery:

1. Place a straight hemostat across the tip of the left ear exposing no more than 3/8 inch for an adult cat and proportionally less for a kitten.



2. Use a straight blade or scalpel to cut the tip off, leaving the hemostat on the ear.



3. Apply a small amount of styptic powder to the cut edge.



4. Keep the hemostat on the cat's ear until just before returning the cat to its trap, to reduce bleeding. A small amount of blood may appear, but it will not need further attention.



Proper placement of the hemostat on the ear tip is critical for proper healing and appearance of the ear.

- ✓ If the clamp is placed too high, the ear tip will be difficult to visualize and recognize from a distance.
- ✓ If the clamp is placed too low, the ear cartilage will be exposed because the skin will retract back, potentially prolonging healing and predisposing the cat to infection at the site.
- ✓ If the clamp is placed at an angle, the pinna will appear pointed from a distance and may be difficult to recognize as a tipped ear.

Thanks to Alley Cat Allies (www.alleycat.org) for allowing us the use of their information!