DROP TRAP CONSTRUCTION – DETAILS

Dimensions are 3 ft. W x 3 ft. L x 14 in. H. The prop stick is 18 in. long. These dimensions work well. A smaller trap might work if you also use a shorter prop-stick (cats back up fast when the trap starts to drop, so the trap must be down by the time they reach the front of it).

Frame

The frame is made of a lightweight, sturdy wood. Most preferable is "strapping" which has rounded edges. If you're unable to find strapping, you can use 2 in. x ½ in. or 2 in. x ¾ in. molding for the eight 36 in. horizontal pieces, and 1 in. x 1 in. regular wood for the five 14 in. vertical pieces. The wood must be lightweight to avoid the possibility of injury to the cats. Rounded edges are better for avoiding scrapes.

Door

The door is made of ¼ in. sanded underlayment plywood (or something similarly thin and smooth) and measures 7 in. W x 18 in. H. Slides for the door can be made from straight-grained fir tongue-and-groove flooring ripped in half, or you can purchase a piece of wooden sliding door track. You'll need two 18 in. pieces. If you use sliding door track, you'll need two extra pieces of 18 in. strapping or 1 in. x 1 in. wood so you can attach the tracks to these two 18 in. pieces, and then attach the 18 in. pieces to the frame. A knob for pulling the door up is also needed.

The door should be located off to one side towards the front corner. It's fastened to the frame after the netting has been attached.

Anchor flap

Attached by hinges to the back of the trap is a flap made of ¾ in. plywood and measuring 14 in. W x 14 in. L. When weighed down, this flap stabilizes and anchors the trap during the trapping operation, allowing the frame of the trap to be light enough not to harm a cat or kitten. It's recommended that a piece of carpeting be attached to the top of the flap for traction. Any heavy object can be used to place on the flap during the

trapping, including a bucket of rocks, provided it does not interfere with the propping up of the frame.

The flap can be mounted to the frame with two T-hinges. Be sure the hinges are mounted high enough on the frame so that when the flap is lowered, the bottom of the trap itself is solidly on the ground and not lifted. This is very important for the stability of the trap when it's propped up. The flap is attached after the netting is put on.

The flap should be located at the opposite corner diagonally from the front door. This position helps balance the trap's weight. When a cat or cats are trapped inside and trying to get out, having the anchor flap and weight in the opposite corner allows you to put your knee down on the frame near the door and keep the frame firmly on the ground.

Netting or mesh covering

Green landscape netting with 1 in. square holes, commonly available in the garden departments of large stores like Home Depot, can be used for the covering. It should be doubled over because some cats are strong enough to break through a single layer. Other choices include safety fencing with 1 in. holes or debris netting, available at builder supply stores. With any plastic netting, it's recommended you double it over. Wire fencing, such as poultry fencing, should not be used because it's not visible enough to a panicked cat and they can also break through it. Hardware cloth mesh is too rough a surface for them to hurl themselves into.

One source for excellent netting material is survivalist stores. They often have heavy duty, pliable cotton or synthetic netting in stock for very low cost. One place to try is Major Surplus & Survival, 1-800-441-8855, www.MajorSurplusNSurvival.com.

To attach the netting, cover the frame with one big piece (or two) ***before*** the door or flap has been mounted. Don't pull the material taut because you want it to be loose and very malleable when a cat tries to break through it. Cut away the extra at the corners, leaving enough for a 3 in. overlap. Then cable tie the netting onto the frame at the corners and, if you're using two pieces of netting, where the pieces join. Be sure the two pieces are joined together well and there's no opening for the cat to squeeze out between them. Leave the netting long enough at the bottom to overlap the frame.

Fasten the door and slides to the outside of the frame in the corner. Also attach a 14 in. piece of strapping or molding (at least ½ in. thick, 1 in. or 2 in. wide) to the inside of the frame behind the inner vertical door slide. This extra piece will allow the netting to be lashed on around the doorway.

Then, using rope, lash the netting to the frame at the bottom rim and around the doorway. It's best if the netting is only attached at the bottom of the frame and around the door and otherwise left loose. (*Note*: unlike the trap in the photos, which is also lashed on the top of the frame.) This allows for the covering to give when a cat pushes against it and is easier on the trap.

Note: the netting should not be stapled onto the frame. The staples can rust or break the netting upon impact by a cat.

Prop stick

An 18 in. prop stick can be made out of a 1 in. x 1 in. piece of wood or with the unused half of tongue-and-groove fir flooring used for making the door slides. With either material, notch the top so the frame of the trap rests securely on the prop stick and

round the bottom so the stick won't jam when pulled. Towards the base of the prop stick, drill a hole large enough for the string to fit through, to make it easier to tie the string on.

Paddle & string

A paddle for holding the string can be cut out from ¼ in. sanded plywood, though any piece of wood you can wrap the string around will do. If you cut out a paddle, make it the shape of a ping-pong paddle that's been on a diet – thin on top and with a handle below. The string should be the heaviest you can get (best is mason's line) or a thin, strong rope. Fluorescent strings tend to stretch too much when wet.