

Building a winter cat shelter

The basic design of a winter cat shelter is to provide an insulated chamber that will have enough room for 2 cats to huddle together or a mother cat with kittens. The opening should not be too wide as to allow weather or predators inside. Materials for the shelter should be weather resistant and can be made of pet carriers that are no longer used, plastic storage tubs, hooded litter boxes, Styrofoam coolers, etc.

The best insulation design is to have a smaller container within a larger container, and fill the gap between the two with straw. If the opening is larger than a cat can get through, use a weather resistant material to narrow the opening. Adhesive to fasten materials should also be weather resistant. Gorilla tape and Gorilla adhesive work well – they are stronger than duct tape for outside projects.

Materials

- Hard-sided pet carriers or crates or
- Plastic/vinyl storage containers (Rubbermaid or Sterilite can be purchased at Walmart. Holes will need to be cut for the opening (see below).
- Gorilla tape
- Styrofoam sheets or leftover Styrofoam from packing materials (Styrofoam sheets can be purchased from Lowe's for \$10 a package).
- Heavy plastic sheeting for optional curtain
- Straw for insulation
- Zip ties to fasten the carrier parts together if pieces have been lost or broken. Zip ties can be purchased at hardware stores or even the Dollar Store.

Method using salvaged materials

Halfway Home Pet Rescue was in possession of large animal crates that were no longer usable because of broken doors. We also had hooded litter boxes and smaller hard-sided carriers with broken parts.

1. Take the smaller container and seal off any windows or vents with strips of Gorilla tape along the inside (to keep the sticky parts away from the animal). Be sure the surface is free of dirt so the tape will be sure to stick.
2. Prepare the larger crate: seal off any windows or vents with the tape. Place a layer of Styrofoam in the bottom.
3. If the opening is large, measure and cut your curtain material (clear plastic sheeting or something durable). Attach it to the inside top of the opening. You might have to trim down the sides a bit. If you're using a harder material, you will have to think this through – cut a hole in it before attaching it.
4. Place the smaller container on top of the Styrofoam. Make sure you have at least an inch all around to fit the straw insulation. Put some straw inside the smaller container for bedding.
5. Stuff straw all around the smaller container – the sides and set some on top.

6. Place the top half of the bigger carrier on top – tuck in the straw and stuff more inside if you can.
7. Tuck the curtain material and cut a slit in the curtain. (If you're using a harder material for this curtain, you may need to cut an opening in it first.)
8. Fasten the top and bottom parts of the carrier together.

Using plastic storage containers

There are many designs available on the Internet. One such design is available here:

<http://www.urbancatleague.org/SheltersMike.html> and we have made that available on our site as well.