

You can make an Outdoor Cat Shelter

Keep your outdoor cat(s) dry all year, and warm in winter, in a long lasting plastic storage bin shelter. The finished shelter costs approximately \$12 and suitable for one cat. Use a larger bin (or multiple bins) for two or more cats. (The cost depends on how many you make.)



Shelter Sizes:

- Small: 1 cat, 18 gallon storage tote - Finished cost approximately \$12
- Medium: 2-3 cats that like each other, 30 gallon storage tote - \$22
- Large: 3-4 cats that like each other, 50 gallon storage box - \$34

Tools Needed:

- **Utility knife** for cutting hole in plastic bin and foam sheets. (A **dremel power tool** makes cutting the plastic bin quick and easy.)
- **Scissors**
- **Tape measure or yardstick**
- **Glue gun**

Supplies Needed:

- **Plastic storage tote:** 18 gallon, 24"L X 16"W X 16"H Ruff-neck totes will last the lifetime of the cat. \$4 on sale (No-name storage bins can crack in cold weather.)
- **1/2" foam insulation with foil radiant barrier 4'X8'** (polyisocyanurate) (\$12 per sheet will line three shelters)
Alternative: 1" thick Styrofoam insulation sheet, 2'X8' (\$8 for one shelter)
- **Heavy duty or outdoor duct tape**
- **Straw** for bedding (\$10 bale – fills 10+ shelters)
- **Heavy duty clear plastic – 8"x8"** (purchase at fabric store)

Cat Shelter Building Instructions:

1. Cut two 6 inch round (or square) holes. The holes should be 3-4 inches off the bottom to prevent flooding in inclement weather.

A second entrance/exit is needed because many cats will not use a shelter without an emergency escape exit. Safety from predators and other cats are at issue. Add a piece of heavy duty clear plastic over one hole. This will provide the cats an exit-only but the plastic will keep the wind out of the shelter.
2. Cut insulation sheet to fit inside snugly. Cut the bottom first, then sides, and finally the top. Cut the sides a bit narrower at the bottom to fit the slant of the storage bin.
3. Cut the top as wide as possible to prevent gaps where the cat's warmth can escape through the top. Make sure the plastic lid fits securely to keep out cold weather and warmth in.
4. Affix the insulation to the sides of the shelter using a glue gun. Cats have very sensitive noses and hot/warm glue does not smell like standard tube glues/adhesives.
5. Use 3" pieces of heavy duty duct tape around the entrance holes to prevent moisture from getting between the plastic bin and the insulation.
6. Fill the cat shelter half way with clean dry straw (not hay). Straw is a very good insulator for the cats. They will nestle in, and under, the straw to stay warm.

Optional:

- Spray paint made for plastic. Paint the shelter the color of your home's foundation and it will be less noticeable.
- Tarp to spread over the cat shelter(s) for added protection from inclement weather. A tarp will add more protection from the weather and camouflage the shelters.
- A solar pool cover can significantly raise the temperature in the shelter. Place the shelter where it will get plenty of sun.

Set out your cat shelter and know that you have provided your outdoor cat(s) with a good shelter and warm comfortable home.



Winter Cat Shelters – Placement Tips

- Plan for more cats than you are currently feeding. Additional cats may find you and need shelter from the elements.
- Place shelter away from where you feed the cats. Uneaten food attracts raccoons and other predators. Never put food or water in the shelter. (If possible, feed the cats in the morning. Feeding at night can attract predators.)
- Place the shelter inside a shed, garage, or barn if possible. Otherwise, place on the south side of your home or a building. This will block the coldest north wind and most snow drifts.
- The entrance/opening should face the building to block the wind. If there is no building, and you have multiple shelters, you can align the shelters so the openings face each other.
- Put some weight on the top of the shelter to prevent the wind from moving it.
- Fill the shelters with straw. Buy a bale in feed stores such as Agway for about \$10. Or, purchase small amounts in pet food stores. The cats will nest and burrow into the straw to stay warm during the winter months.

Note: Avoid using blankets, towels, etc. inside the shelter. The inside will be exposed to moisture from outdoors and the cats themselves. Wet fabric will draw the warmth away from the cats and can grow mold and mildew.

- If needed, add a little catnip in the shelter to draw the cats inside.
- Check the inside of the shelters weekly to make sure they aren't taking in moisture that would chill the cats.
- Upgrade your cat shelters in winter by covering them with a solar pool cover. These covers can be found on the side of the road during bulk pick-up days. A 12 ft round cover costs about \$30. Cut with household scissors and drape over the shelters, silver side down.