

Building Shelters for Feral Cats

A Step-by-Step Guide

1. Put signs on the tops of the shelters – glue a laminated sign to the top of the lid of the shelter.



2. Cut a hole for the tunnel in one side of each plastic tote bin. Outline the hole using the end of a tunnel or a template. It should be cut 18 cm (7") in from one end of the bin, 25 cm (9") from the bottom of the bin. Cut a similar hole (an "escape" hole) on the other side of the bin, diagonally opposite the first hole.

3. Cut an extra floor for each bin using the thickest Styrofoam possible. Smaller pieces of Styrofoam can be fitted together to fill the space. They do not need to be fastened together, and this floor should not be fastened to the bin.



4. Cut Durofoam pieces for an inside box using the appropriate cardboard template. Use the templates to cut each of the six pieces required for the box. Put each set of six cut pieces into a bin, along with a tunnel and a fabric cover for the second "escape" tunnel, to indicate that they are ready to be assembled.

5. If the template-cut pieces of Styrofoam do not already have one side that is coated with foil (as Durofoam does), attach Reflectix or reflective foil to one side of each template-cut piece of Styrofoam. Put a thin layer of adhesive about 1" (2.5 cm) around one side of the Styrofoam. Press the glued side down on the Reflectix or Mylar film. Trim the Reflectix or Mylar. (The shiny surface reflects body heat back onto the animal.)



6. Assemble the Durofoam or Reflectix-coated Styrofoam pieces to form a box that fits inside the plastic bin. The sides with foil should be facing inside the box. Make this inner box as draft-free as possible. Use adhesive or tape to form the box. Fit, but do not attach the end into which a hole must be cut to accommodate the tunnel.



7. Add the tunnel – cut a hole in the panel of Durofoam to match the hole in the bin. Insert a tunnel and secure it both the inside and outside of the shelter using adhesive and/or Gorilla tape. Once this has been done, attach this end to the rest of the foam box.

8. Fill the space between the plastic bin and the foam box using scrap pieces of foam insulation, Reflectix, Mylar or straw.



9. Add a lid to the Styrofoam box but do not attach it. Scrap pieces of Styrofoam can be used on top of this lid to fill any space that remains between it and the lid of the plastic bin.

10. Three-quarters fill the box with straw, and fix a cover of waterproof fabric over the "escape hole".

11. Put the plastic lid on the bin. It must be left open so that caretakers can change the straw from time to time. Strips of tape could be used to secure one side of the lid, just to keep it from blowing away in the wind.



Making Shelters from Styrofoam Boxes

Single Styrofoam Boxes

1. If a box is large enough to serve as a shelter on its own, line it with another layer of Durofoam insulation.
2. If using an insulation other than Durofoam, line it on all sides with Reflectix or another foil liner.
3. Cut an entrance for the tunnel; insert the tunnel; and tape around the opening to make it as airtight as possible. Cut a 2nd hole, diagonally opposite the first, to serve as an "escape" hole.
4. Attach a piece of Durofoam or lined Styrofoam to the inside of the lid of the box for greater insulation.
5. Three-quarters fill the box with straw, and fix a cover of waterproof fabric over the "escape hole".
6. Glue a laminated sign to the top of the box.

Boxes which are not an appropriate size to serve as shelters on their own may be joined to make a "semi-detached" or a "two-story" shelter.

Long, narrow boxes

1. Two boxes should be joined together side-by-side with adhesive. Gorilla tape should be used to reinforce the joints.
2. The insides of the boxes should be lined with foil or Reflectix. Cut the foil or Reflectix to size and use a thin layer of adhesive to hold it in place.
3. A square hole should be cut out between the two boxes so that a cat can move easily from one side to the other. Cut this hole at least 5 cm from the top, bottom, and sides of the box. This makes for greater strength for the structure.
4. Use the template to cut an 18 cm hole for the tunnel in one end or one side of the structure. Insert the tunnel and use black tape to hold it in place. Cut a 2nd hole, diagonally opposite the first, to serve as an "escape" hole.
5. Three-quarters fill the boxes with straw, and fix a cover of waterproof fabric over the "escape hole".
6. Do not tape the lid down as caretakers must have access to the box to change the straw from time to time. Strips of tape could be used to secure one side of the lid, just to keep it from blowing away in the wind.
7. Glue a laminated sign to the top of the box.

Shallow boxes

Two boxes are used – with one box sitting on top of the other box.

1. Cut the bottom out of the upper box. Trim the cut-out piece to provide a double floor for the shelter. Where the lid fits on the bottom box, cut the lip off so that the edge between the two boxes is smooth and flat.
2. The two boxes should be joined together using adhesive. The joint should then be reinforced using Gorilla tape.
3. The insides of the boxes should be lined with foil or Reflectix. Cut the foil or Reflectix to size. Use a thin layer of adhesive to hold it in place.
4. Cut a hole for the tunnel in one end of the resulting box. Outline the hole using the end of a tunnel or a template. It should be cut into the centre of one end of the box, 18 cm (7") from the bottom of the box. Cut a 2nd hole, diagonally opposite the first, to serve as an "escape" hole.
5. Half-fill the box with straw, and fix a cover of waterproof fabric over the "escape hole".
6. Do not tape the lid down as caretakers must have access to the box to change the straw from time to time. Strips of tape could be used to secure one side of the lid, just to keep it from blowing away in the wind.
7. Glue a laminated sign to the top of the box.

