



## How to Build a Winter Shelter for Community Cats

### MATERIALS:

- Large plastic storage container with a tight fitting lid.  
*TIP: pick one big enough for the cat to be comfortable in once there are a few inches of insulation on the inside*
- Insulation – a Styrofoam cooler (to fit inside the storage container), sheets of Styrofoam, reflective insulation, or other safe, sturdy padding
- Straw (**not hay**)
- Duct tape
- Zip ties
- Box cutter
- Catnip or cat treats



### BUILDING INSTRUCTIONS:

1. One of the easiest and most common Kitty Cottage designs uses a Styrofoam cooler fitted inside a large plastic storage container.  
*TIP: 18 or 36 gallon Rubbermaid bins make great cat shelters.*
2. Fit the insulation inside your storage container. If the cooler doesn't fit nicely, you may need to deconstruct it. Make sure to have a layer of insulation on the bottom and the top. Use duct tape to secure it, so that it won't shift or collapse on the cat.
3. Cut a door on the outside of the container and through the insulation. It is best to have it on the long side of the bin and off to one side, so that it's less drafty inside.  
*TIP: make sure the opening is high enough to clear the insulation on the bottom of the bin and keep the straw from falling out (3" – 4" from the bottom).*
4. Duct tape around the opening to secure the insulation to the outside of the container and prevent rainwater from getting in between the layers.
5. Furnish your Kitty Cottage with a layer of straw for extra insulation and comfort.  
*TIP: Blankets or towels can hold dampness and are cold, they are not recommended.*
6. Snap on the lid.  
*TIP: Secure the lid further by poking holes in the top and side of the container (near the top) and looping a zip tie through.*
7. Include a bag of catnip or cat treats to sprinkle inside the bin and to create a trail of treats leading up to the entrance to let the community cats know the Kitty Cottage is for them!



### CAREGIVER TIPS:

- Use at least an 18-gallon bin. Line it with insulation: pieces of Styrofoam recycled from other packaging and reflective insulation from the home improvement store are two easy-to-work with materials.
- Don't forget to a thin layer of insulation under the lid. Secure the insulation with duct tape.
- Make sure to completely tape around the doorway to prevent rain from getting between the insulation and side of the bin.
- **Straw vs Hay:** choose straw as bedding for your Kitty Cottage, **not hay or blankets**. Straw is a by-product of grain production and commonly used for bedding, while hay is a grass grown specifically for food. Straw will provide more cushion and warmth than hay and is less likely to mold. Blankets retain moisture and stay cold.

