

# Keeping Cats Warm in Winter

(How caregivers can make their own – or purchase these shelters from NMHPU)



## Easy To Make Cat Shelters

No More Homeless Pets in Utah may be able to provide feral cat caregivers with pre-made winter cat houses (\$10 donation requested) or the large Styrofoam coolers with which you can make your own shelter! For availability please call our hotline at 801-364-0370 X 18.

Large Styrofoam coolers make great feral cat shelters. Many people will ask their veterinarian to save the **large** coolers they get their vaccines shipped in because they are extra thick and are perfect for kitty houses! Hospitals, fish markets, and even grocery stores may be glad to donate large coolers. Some farm stores sell extra large coolers manufactured for deer meat storage. If the coolers are less than 1 ½ inches thick, you should cover the box with layers of bubble wrap or insulation. When using insulation be certain that it is the kind that has paper on both sides, and make sure none of the fibers are exposed when your shelter is completed (you can duct tape over any exposed areas near the door hole).

To begin, turn cooler upside down and cut an entrance hole (or possibly two) in the side (or sides). Place entrance hole 1-2 inches above the line where the lid meets the cooler body and place it at one end of the longer side of the cooler. Then simply glue the cooler lid shut. Glue Styrofoam together using 'Liquid Nails, Tub Surrounds' type or foam insulation product "Great Stuff." Reinforce seam with duct tape. Two entrance holes are recommended only if the shelter is in an area where predators may pose a threat to the cats.

Next, wrap the shelter (think Christmas present!) with the thickest black plastic sheeting you can find. You can purchase this at any home improvement or garden store. Tape all seams with duct tape or other tape that withstands cold temps and water.

It's best to be generous with your duct tape, and 'T' the ends, because duct tape does lose some of its adhesive quality in the wet and cold. Black Scotch brand tape seems to work better in the cold than the standard gray. After wrapping, locate your door hole and cut a hole in the plastic using a box cutter, then tape all around the door.

### ***Making The Most of Your Winter Shelter-Important information***

Make a curtain over the door holes by using bubble wrap. Use two layers. Cut the bubble wrap to make fringes (leave the top few inches solid, and cut vertically to make the fringe). Then duct tape your curtain over the door holes.

If your winter shelter is exposed to the elements it is best to put a piece of plywood over the top of the shelter as well as another piece of wood (or similar material) put at a slant over the doorway. You may also need to place the shelter on a pallet. Another option is to make an igloo-type tunnel over the doorway using a smaller cooler or other material. It is very important to do what you can to keep moisture OUT.

If the shelter is to be placed outside, hardwood chips (not cedar) or straw make great stuffing inside the shelter. They absorb moisture. Cloth can get wet and freeze, making the shelter cold. If the shelter is in a garage or other very dry area, towels or kitty beds work well. You can buy fleece or fake sheepskin at fabric stores and cut to fit. Check your shelter frequently to ensure it is staying dry.

When you first put the shelter out, put some catnip inside and if you have a bubble wrap fringe, it's best to tack part of it up at first so the cat can easily see the entrance. Placing the shelter on a pallet works nicely to keep it a bit up off the ground, but is not always necessary. In windy areas, you may need to weight the shelter down with bricks or similar.

It's important to make a little laminated sign that says something like: "This shelter is part of a humane Trap, Neuter, Return program for feral (stray) cats, **please do not remove**. If you have questions, please call..." Always get permission from property owner before placing a shelter on property other than your own.

### ***Electric heated pads***

Several sizes are available through Future Pets. They are VERY reasonably priced and work well inside coolers.  
[www.futurepets.com](http://www.futurepets.com)

A very sturdy one (item number 20917 for small or 20918 for medium) can be found at Valley Vet Supply  
[www.valleyvet.com](http://www.valleyvet.com) or 1-800-419-9524.

