

Marcy's Easy to Assemble Outdoor Shelter

When spayed or neutered and vaccinated, and provided with daily sustenance, free-roaming cats can live a happy and healthy life in their outdoor homes, but they can always use some extra help in cold or severe weather -- especially if they don't have existing shelter.

Outdoor shelters come in all shapes and sizes, but they don't have to be fancy! Here are some tips from a local mentor for creating a simple and easy to maintain shelter that will help your colony cats stay safer, warmer, and healthier.

MATERIALS

Housing: Rugged plastic tote or foam cooler. Don't worry if you can't locate a foam cooler. Foam sheets are readily available and can be cut and used to line a plastic tote.

Platform: To elevate the shelter off the ground and help keep the shelter warm and dry. Some examples: appropriately sized pieces of 2 x 4 lumber, pallets or landscape timbers.

Awning: Plastic dish tub cut in half. Although not necessary, this provides additional protection from wind, rain, and snow.



Tubs come in different sizes. Choose one that, when cut in half, isn't too big for the housing.

Fasteners:

Wood screws long enough to go through the cooler or tote and secure it to the platform material.



Zip ties to attach the awning to the housing.



Heavy duty duct tape to secure foam and lid to housing.



Tools: You will need scissors or shears, a drill and screw driver, a utility knife, and a marker.

ASSEMBLY



Start by cutting an entrance hole in your housing, no more than 6 inches in diameter. Depending on the location of your shelter you may want to add a secondary exit so your cat can escape in the event that wildlife (such as a raccoon) comes to visit.

If you are using a plastic tote and foam sheets to line a plastic tote, cut the pieces to fit inside. You can use duct tape to secure to the sides, but it's easier just to cut the pieces so that they fit tightly side by side.



Use duct tape to secure a piece of foam to the bottom of the lid.

Cut the dish pan in half and cut out an arched opening along the bottom of each half. Poke or drill three sets of two holes along the upper and side rims of your awning so that you can attach it to the shelter. Place the awning on the housing over the entrance and use a marker to mark matching holes on the housing. Then poke or drill the holes through the housing. Attach the awning to the housing by running one zip tie through each set of holes and fastening the tie tightly on the inside of the shelter. Cut off the excess end of each tie.





Attach the housing to the platform material with wood screws. (Cut squares from the excess awning plastic to create a stop for each screw. By screwing each screw through this piece of plastic, you can prevent it from going completely through the housing and help prevent breakage from wear.)

Next, use two strips of duct tape to secure your lid to the housing.

Place straw in the shelter, loosely packed so your free roamers can make a nest inside.

Do not use hay or blankets as they retain moisture, lose their insulating properties, and can become moldy. Place your shelter in a discreet quiet location away from foot traffic.

Shelters keep free-roaming cats comfortable in cold and other harsh or severe weather conditions.



Thanks for caring about the free roamers!