

# Humane Rescue Alliance Community Cat Programs Tip Sheet

## Providing Winter Shelter for Community Cats



Cats are clever about adapting to their environment and finding shelter from the elements. Cats love warm places to sleep and will curl up in the most awkward places and positions. On a cold night, a resourceful community cat may cuddle up to your car's warm engine. This is not safe and should be discouraged by knocking on the hood of your car before you start it up. Give your neighborhood cats a nicer option – a kitty cottage.

Kitty cottages, when placed on a deck, under a porch, or nestled in the garden, give cats a warm, dry, safe place to sleep. Kitty cottages can be built in a variety of shapes and sizes. With many options for materials, they are not expensive to make. HRA often hosts workshops on how to build your own. For those with no time for DIY projects, deluxe kitty cottages can be purchased online.

### Caregiver Tip: Straw vs. Hay

Choose **straw** as bedding for your kitty cottage over hay. 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.

Community Cats live outside with no particular home or owner. Learn more about how you can help them:

- [humanerescuealliance.org/community-cats](http://humanerescuealliance.org/community-cats)
- [catnipp@humanerescuealliance.org](mailto:catnipp@humanerescuealliance.org)
- 202-608-1358 x 101



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### DIY Winter Kitty Cottages

You can make your own kitty cottages out of a variety of easy to obtain materials. Your shelter should be waterproof and insulated and large enough for at least one cat to curl up inside when filled with straw.

Whatever material you use, cut a 6-inch doorway several inches from the bottom of the shelter. Placing it off to the side provides an additional windbreak.

**Simple Cooler Cottage** utilizes a large Styrofoam cooler with an entrance way cut in the side. Use duct tape to seal the lid to the base. No additional insulation is needed. Since this is lightweight, you may need to place some bricks on top to prevent it from blowing over.



**Storage Bin Shelters** are sturdy and easy to make. Use at least an 18-gallon solid colored 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 add insulation under the lid. Secure the insulation with duct tape.



Make sure to tape around the doorway to prevent rain from getting between the insulation and the side of the bin.

**Mild Weather Nest Boxes** Provide your community cats a nesting spot in mild weather with a basket or box full of straw placed under a covered porch. This gives kitty a place to get out of the rain and to stay cool in summer heat.

