

BUILDING A SHELTER FOR COMMUNITY CATS



SPCA HAMILTON/
BURLINGTON

AVOIDING POTENTIAL DANGERS

Please **DO NOT** use any of the following items which may present a danger to the animals:



- ✗ **Blankets or Towels:** These fabrics absorb moisture and can freeze, causing hypothermia.
- ✗ **Hay:** wet hay grows mold and can make cats sick, for this reason the rule of thumb is STRAW for Strays.
- ✗ **Carpet Scraps or Foam that Absorbs Water:** These trap moisture and become cold quickly.
- ✗ **Heated Mats or Electric Devices.**
- ✗ **Chemical Ice Melts or De-icers Near the Shelter:** Salt and antifreeze are toxic if cats walk on it or lick their paws.
- ✗ **Certain Types of Insulation:** Fiberglass can irritate skin, eyes, and respiratory systems if cats brush against it.
- ✗ **Open Heaters:** Fire hazard in confined shelters.

HELPING COMMUNITY CATS STAY COMFORTABLE YEAR-ROUND

Across Hamilton, Burlington, and surrounding communities, many cats live outdoors as part of established colonies. These community cats are well adapted to outdoor life and often do incredibly well in the neighbourhoods they call home.



But when temperatures dip dangerously low—they can use a little extra support. One of the easiest and most impactful ways to help is by providing a simple outdoor shelter.



Even though these cats are naturally resilient, a weatherproof shelter gives them a protected place to warm up, stay dry, and rest safely. It's a small act of kindness that can make a big difference in their comfort and well-being.

The best part? Building a shelter is affordable, beginner-friendly, and requires only a few materials. And once it's in place, the local cats will absolutely appreciate the cozy spot **made just for them.**

MATERIALS AND STEPS

Using just a few simple, easy-to-find materials, you can provide critical warmth and protection for cats who must brave the outdoors during the winter months.

MATERIALS LIST

- Large plastic tote (approx. 68 L)
- Box cutter
- Gorilla All-Weather Tape
- Straw (NOT hay)
- Permanent marker
- Hair dryer
- DuroSpan 0.75" EPS insulation board
- Plastic flowerpot or tubbing

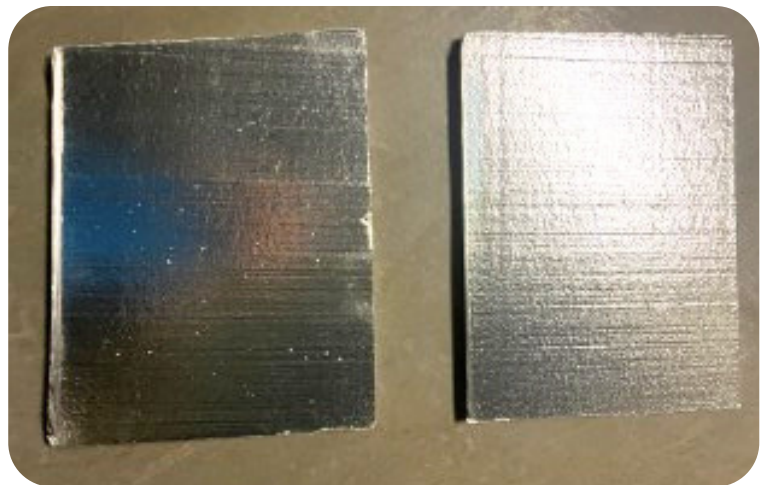


HOW TO BUILD THE SHELTER

- 1 Mark a small circular entrance (6-8 inches wide) on the long side. Warm the area with a hair dryer, use an x-acto knife to cut out the circular entrance.



- 2 Next, measure two of the inside pieces to fit the two long sides, do the same for the two shorter sides. Finally measure a piece that fits the bottom of the bin.

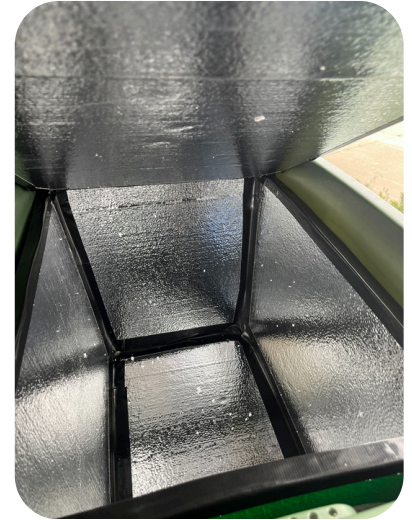


- 3 Line interior walls with insulation panels, with the green side facing outwards, the shiny side facing the cat so that your product looks like the one in the picture.



HOW TO BUILD THE SHELTER

- 4 Tape all seams and edges securely on the bottom, short sides, and long sides. Trace and cut a hole in the insulation where the entrance is on the bin.



- 5 Insert the tubing or plastic flower pot into the entrance and tape around the edges to secure it to the insulation. Also tape around the outside to create a seal so that water stays out.



- 6 Now fill the shelter with clean, dry straw, ensuring that you place some between the sides of the bin and the insulation to provide extra warmth.



HOW TO BUILD THE SHELTER

- 7 Measure the top of the insulated box so that you can cut a piece of insulation to fit loosely under the plastic lid. Tape around the edges of the lid.

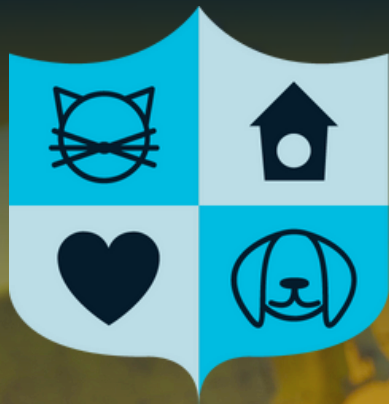


CONGRATULATIONS!

You've officially completed your first winterized community cat shelter—what an amazing milestone. Your time, care, and compassion will make a real difference for cats who rely on safe, warm spaces during the cold months.



Thank you for taking this meaningful step to support community cats!



SPCA

HAMILTON/BURLINGTON



To make the greatest impact for animals in the Hamilton Burlington area, we encourage you to support the HBSPCA. While we share a commitment to animal welfare, we operate independently from the OSPCA. Ensure your donations directly benefit the animals and communities we care for every day. Our team is here to answer any questions.