

Building Homes for Homeless Cats



By Ginger Landry GRI Volunteer

There are way too many community/homeless cats in the Northern Neck. They all try to make it through the cold and wet harsh

coats, but they still need warm, dry places to protect them from harsh weather. Building a shelter is relatively simple, and there are a variety of plans for inexpensive cat shelters available online:

winter months in the NNK. And of course, the rainier or snowier it gets, the worse it is for our outdoor furry friends. We all know that cats have thick

- Plywood shelter
- Styrofoam shelter
- Storage bin shelter

No matter the design of your shelter, it needs three essential qualities:

- Shelters must be well insulated
- Have minimal air space
- Waterproof so the interior remains dry

When constructing a shelter, size is important.

It should be large enough to house several felines, but small enough to trap cats' body heat to warm the inside. If the shelter is too large, it will be difficult for cats to keep the space warm.

It is recommended to put shelters where the cats are already used to going, like in an area you know they like to hang out. It is best not to put shelters out in the open, like in the middle of a yard or lot, but under or against something, i.e. a building, fence, tree, porch, bush or some type of overhang. Ideally, the spot will be out of the wind but exposed to the sun.

If you're building your own shelter, look for insulation like straw that repels water. Hay, in contrast, can soak up moisture and get moldy. Straw is the best.

In addition to providing winter shelter, feeding community/homeless cats is a life-saving service and it needs to be done

responsibly. If you decide to do it, place food and water near the shelter where it's easily accessible and safe from the elements.

The Humane Society suggests placing two shelters with their doorways facing each other and securing a board between them to create a canopy. NNK is prone to freezing temperatures, so place water, dry or canned



food in a thick plastic container that's deep and wide. Place food/water containers under canopy elevated off the ground.

These easy DIY suggestions will not only assist homeless cats to survive the winter months but also warm your heart. As a rule of thumb, it's better to help sooner rather than later. So if you're worrying about how to keep a stray cat warm outside in the winter, go ahead and start helping now. *References any of the following sites for detailed DIY methods: garfieldsrescue.org, alleycat.org, neighborhoodcats.org*



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