

# How to Construct a Cat Winter Shelter

There are many ways to build winter cat shelters; you can find many choices on the internet with a simple search and some even have how-to videos. These instructions will make two(2) shelters.

## **Important things to remember:**

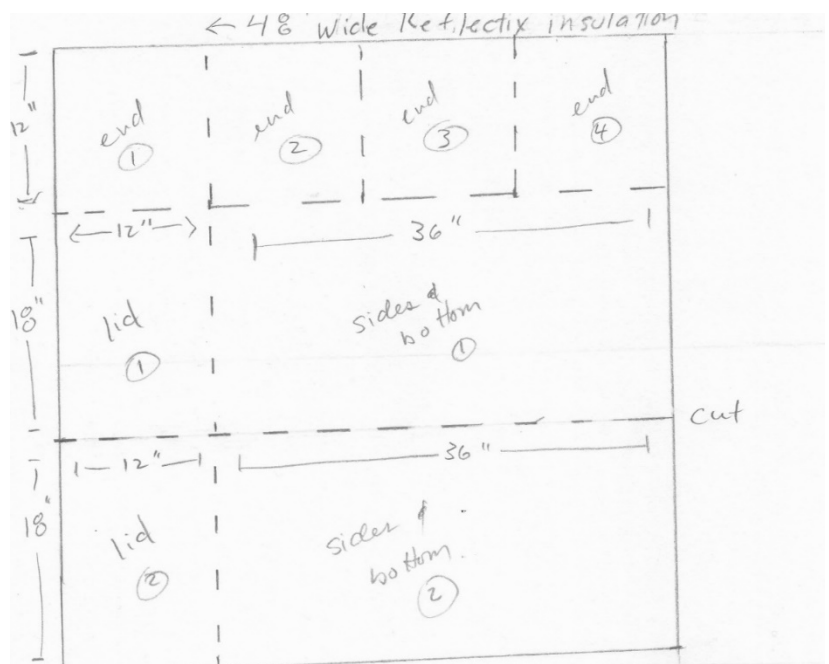
- Doors should be narrow enough to keep out big predators, & wide enough to let in fat tomcats; you need 2 doors so cats have an escape route in case they need it.
- Don't cut the door at ground level: that can let in rain and mud and cats don't need it anyway: they are good jumpers ☺! Also, doors higher on the tote leave a warm place for them to burrow into the straw.
- Straw stays driest: cloth, hay and cat beds will all get wet and hold moisture making the shelter useless.
- Rubbermaid totes are durable: they weather well, keep out the rain and aren't brittle. If cost is a factor, other brands can also be used.
- 18-gallon totes are reasonably easy to hide in the foliage or a blackberry bramble; they hold about two cats that like each other, depending on the size of the felines. Larger shelters can also work well for a site and these same materials can be used to build them too. The main decision is if you can install it safely at your colony.

## **Materials needed:**

- Four feet of 48" reflectix insulation, available at home and garden stores.
- Two 18-gallon Rubbermaid storage totes
- Heavy-duty duct tape
- Straw (Not hay. Buy by the bale at a garden store.)
- Scissors
- Box cutter
- Tape measure
- Sharpie marker pen

## **Step by Step Instructions**

1. With your scissors, cut your reflectix material into 8 pieces as follows:



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2. With your box cutter (plus strength and determination), cut two 5 to 5.5" diameter holes in your totes, one for each tote. To make it a bit easier to cut, try heating your blade with a hair dryer.
3. Fold one "Sides & Bottom" piece of reflectix into a U to cover both long sides and the bottom of your tote and tape it into place. It should look like this:
4. Add two "End" pieces to the short side of the tote and tape them both securely.
5. Use your box cutter and scissors to cut the holes in the reflectix to match those in your tote.
6. Using lots of 2" – 3" lengths of duct tape, go all around the holes to make them water tight and secure; these holes will take the most wear and tear as cats go in and out so don't skimp here.
7. Tape the "Lid" piece of reflectix to the lid of the tote.
8. Fill with LOTS of straw. It will compact as they sleep in it and it might be hard for you to add more later (brambles grow over the shelters), so be generous!
9. Use your marker pen to label your cat shelter so curious people (hopefully) leave it alone. Write "Cat Shelter" on the sides. Add a strip of silver duct tape (for dark color lids) for writing on top of the lid.

