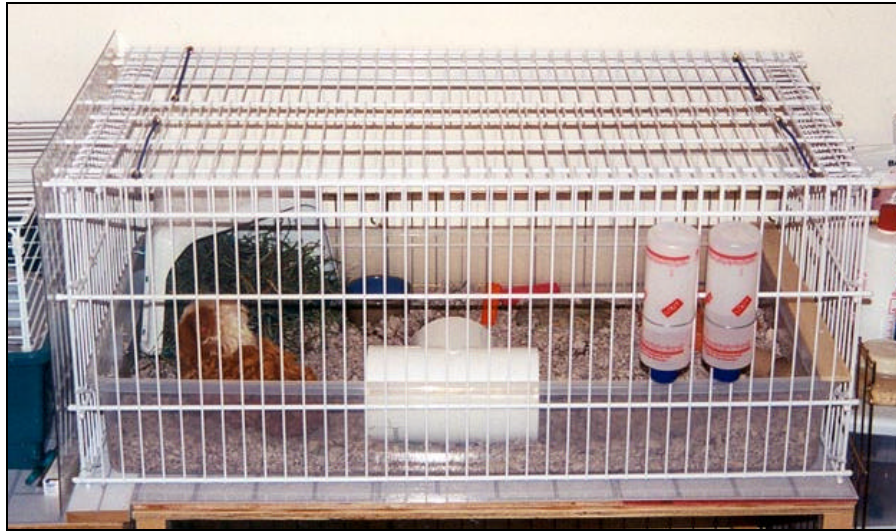# Instructions for Making a Cat-Proof Guinea Pig Cage

This cat-proof guinea pig cage is sturdy (heavy, organizational shelving is used), is relatively inexpensive (considering the price and size of commercial cages), and is very easy to make. The cage has a removable top and is 22"W x 38"L x 16"H; the cost is about $50 U.S. dollars. If a cat-proof top is not required, the cost is about $40. The supplies listed are available at Home Depot but they should be readily available at other large hardware-supply stores.

Items needed:
1. One Sterilite® (brand name) "Underbed Box" (39-1/8"L x 22-1/4"W x 6-3/8"H)
2. 20 Cable Ties (7.5", 50-lb.-strength ties by Thomas & Bates)
3. *Two-12"W x 38"L "Linen" shelves by Lee Rowan® (brand name) – for the top
4. Two-16"W x 38"L "Linen" shelves by Lee Rowan® – for the front and back
5. Two-16"W x 21"L "Linen" shelves by Lee Rowan® – for the two ends
6. Two bags of "End Caps" by Lee Rowan® – to cover cut-edges of wire grid
7. *Four to eight-5/32" X 10" Bungee® Cord Mini-Tie Downs – to secure top to cage
(* These items are *not* needed if the cat-proof top is not to be added to the cage.)

Directions for assembling:
Purchase four-foot lengths of the shelving and have Home Depot cut the shelves to the sizes needed. Alternatively, use a hacksaw or heavy-duty bolt cutters to cut the shelving to the proper dimensions. Make sure that you have the *right* number of grids (e.g., 39 if it is to be 38" long and 22 if it is to be 21" long.) There will be a 1/2" extension beyond the last upright wire on each end of the shelving pieces. IMPORTANT: these cut ends are very sharp! Lightly file the cut edges and then cover all of the cut edges with the smaller-sized end caps. Do not use the larger-sized end caps since they fall off.

Place the Sterilite® container on the floor or other flat, solid surface, and arrange the cut shelving around the sides of the container to form the walls of the cage. Position the lip of the shelving on the top rather than the bottom. In theory, the lip could be a deterrent to any guinea pig that decides to climb a few items and then escape a cage with no top.
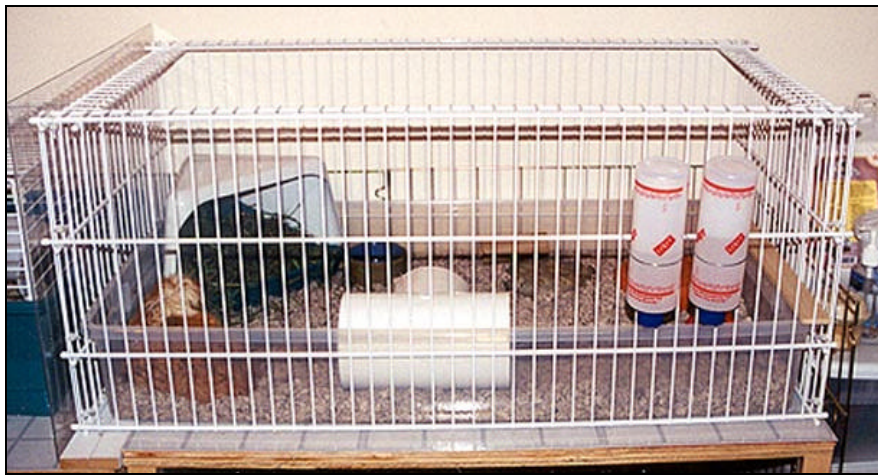
Also, the placement of the water bottle and the Bungee® cords works best with the lip of the 16" shelf located at the top. Although the shelving comes in other widths, using the 16"-width shelving allows for climbing items to be added.

The edges will overlap at the corners (there will be a 1/2" extension on either side of the last upright grid/wire). Please note that the size of the finished cage is different from the dimensions listed on the label for the underbed container. The reason for this is that the base of the box is narrower than the top. The smaller size of the cage pulls the box in a bit and tightens it up.

Secure each corner of the upright shelving pieces with three cable ties and use pliers to pull them tightly and then trim off the excess length. Secure the overlapped-lip edges at the top with two cable ties: one on each side.

To form the top of the cage, take the two pieces of 12"W x 38"L shelving, cover the cut-wire edges with the end caps, and place both pieces of shelving on top of the cage. Position them so that the lip of each shelf faces downward on the outside edges of the top of the cage (forming a lid). The two pieces for the top will overlap slightly at the middle.

To secure the cage and make it cat-proof, use the Bungee® mini-tie down cords to hold the top-overlapping shelving pieces in place. Hook the cords on the edges where the top pieces overlap in the middle and secure them to the top edge of the opposite side of the cage. Make *sure* that you are securing *opposite* sides together (e.g., a top piece and a cage edge/side). It's best to secure the top in several places and to do it in both directions. This makes the cage very secure but, if needed, the top may be secured at the outside edges where the two top pieces overlap. Make sure that whatever you use to secure this area goes through the two overlapping sections that form the top and the top edge of the cage.

The cage can be easily accessed without removing the entire top; just place the front piece of the top on the back piece, leaving part of the top of the cage covered and part open. This cage may be used without the top for those who do not have the need for a cat-proof guinea pig setup. Finally, make sure that this cage is placed on a sturdy table or shelf; it's heavy!

Copyright © 1999 Kathy Anderson All Rights Reserved