

Custom habitat pads

Information packet for sewing volunteers


- Custom pads used in GCWR's Wildlife Intake Center (WIC) help provide a safe, comfortable environment for wildlife patients
- Pads get worn and need to be replaced from time to time; so a steady inflow of new pads is a huge help and very appreciated
- A sewing volunteer who has been making pads provided the following information and hopes it will be useful
- Please let us know any questions not answered by the following info

Thank you for volunteering!

Small Mammal Habitat

Wildlife Intake Center (WIC) Habitat Pads

This information is from a very novice sewing volunteer. Depending on the fabric weight used for the outside and the padding thickness, the finished pad size can vary a little from pad to pad. Goal is to cover the bottom of the cage wall-to-wall or close to it. 😊

Small Mammal Cage & pads	Dimensions	Fabric requirements and other tips
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fabric cut dimensions: 26 ½" L X 15" W• Note: this size typically allows for thick padding and sufficient structural seams, including:<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. About an inch in from the edge, sew a seam completely around pad2. Sew one or more seams across the pad to keep padding in place• Approx. finished pad dimensions: 24 ¾" L X 13" W	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fabric requirements:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Difficult to snag (most WIC patients have claws that snag easily)– Easy to wash and dry– Heavy enough to not slide around too much• Outside pad material options:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– These cages are typically used for very young patients so something cozy like fleece or flannel sheets works well– Other tight-weave sturdy fabric you might have laying around that would be comfy for babies❖ <i>No terry cloth or towels please.</i>• Inside padding options<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Blankets with no large holes or tears– Quilt batting or other similar fill (likely to need 2 or more layers if not a substantial weight)

General pad making steps and notes

Steps	Notes from a complete novice (You are likely to know more than I do about sewing 😊)
1. Layout and cut material to size.	A. I found that making a thin cardboard pattern of the pad I'm making was the easiest thing to do. Then I just trace around the cardboard and cut out the layers. B. However any method you prefer to measure, mark and cut will be fine.
2. Assemble and pin.	A. Put the outside layers face to face so they will be on the outside when you turn the pad inside out. B. Lay the padding on top and pin the layers together. Note: due to thick layers, using <u>long pins makes it easier!</u> C. I found using more pins is particularly helpful for fleece or any fabric that stretches a lot to keep it in shape while you sew.
3. Sew around the edge of the 3 sides of the pad and a little of the 4 th side of the pad.	A. I've been using all-purpose poly thread and a size 14 needle for most pads. If I have particularly heavy material, I might use a heavier thread and needle. B. The standard seam allowance is ½ inch but mine are never that precise. (Note: wildlife doesn't care if your seams are crooked or if the thread matches 😊) C. For the 4 th side, sew about 2 inches in from each corner leaving most of the 4th side open so it's easy to turn out.
4. <u>Before you turn the pad inside out</u> , cut excess material off the corners almost to the seam. Also, snip off any hanging threads.	A. This is an important step in the process. Cut quite close to corner seam to get nice crisp square corners when the pad is turned out. Also keep a pen or pencil nearby to help poke out the corners if needed. B. Trim off any excess padding or material that will make the edge too bulky anywhere along the seams.
5. After the pad is turned out, tuck in the 4 th side and prepare to sew.	A. Usually it works well to tuck/fold in the last un-sewn part and sew across the full 4 th side edge to secure it. B. Sometimes I have ended up hand-sewing the 4 th side closed when the edge is too thick for my machine but that is the exception.
6. Sew a structural seam around the inside edge of the pad about an inch or so in	A. I usually sew about an inch in from the outer edge but the thickness of the pad can sometimes cause you to sew the seam in a little further, which is perfectly fine. B. This step helps keep the pad's shape through repeated laundering and improves the pad's overall structure.
7. Sew additional structural seams across the pad.	A. For this size pad, I add at least one additional seam across the body of the pad to keep padding from bunching up. B. If the pad is too floppy, I add additional seams to ensure sufficient structure for the habitat pad.
8. Do a final review and snip off any remaining hanging threads.	Ta da! A perfect pad for wildlife patients!