

All you need to know about housing dogs in animal shelters

Most shelters need a variety of housing to maintain the physical and mental well-being of their dogs. Here we discuss the uses, advantages, and disadvantages of various kennel/room types and configurations.

Indoor/Outdoor vs. Indoor/Indoor vs. Single Kennels

There is a lot of discussion about dog kennel type and what works best in the shelter environment, however “best” has a lot of different meanings depending on one’s viewpoint. To clarify these housing types and what they offer and do not offer dogs and the shelters who house them, here are some considerations.

Note: Double compartment dog housing (real life type room with access to second room or outdoor area for elimination, traditional type kennel with two sides divided by a guillotine door or a double compartment cage setup) is the basis for housing dogs in animal shelters. Single kennels are adequate for surgery prep and recovery or partial day display but do not meet dogs’ needs in housing or staff needs in caring for the dogs.

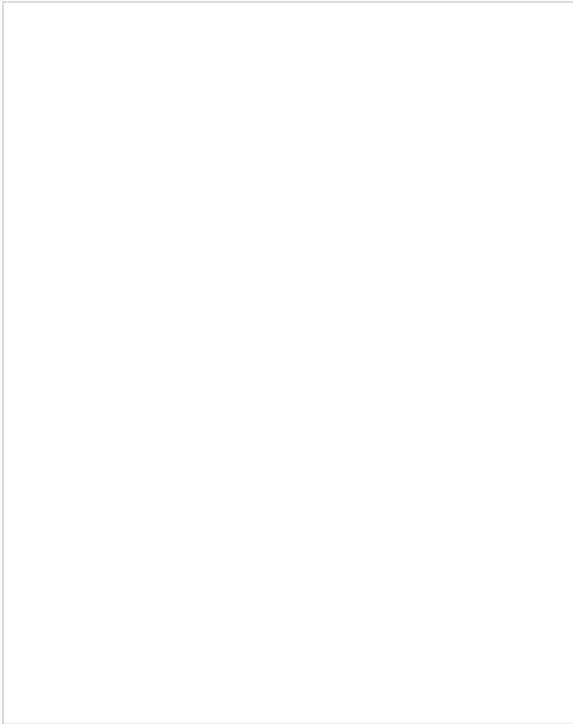
| Component | Indoor/Outdoor | Indoor/Indoor | Indoor Single Kennel |
|---|----------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Meets dogs' needs to eliminate away from bed/food/water | x | x | |
| Provides space to move about | x | x | less |
| Reduces the risk of disease transmission | x | x | |
| Reduces disease exposure | x | x | |
| Enhances staff safety | x | x | |
| Improves staff efficiency | x | x | |
| Provides place for retreat | x | x | |
| Elimination can occur outside | x | | |
| Reduces indoor odor | x | | |
| Provides more environmental choices for the dog | x | x (indoor only) | |
| Reduces volume of conditioned space | x | | |
| Kennel door needed in addition to guillotine door (\$) | x | | |
| All indoor environment | | x | x |
| Reduce barking noise outside | | x | x |
| Dogs must be moved out of kennel for cleaning...thus: | | | x |

Increases risks of disease exposure and disease spread, increases risks for staff safety and reduces staff efficiency

Component

Indoor/Outdoor Indoor/Indoor Single Kennel

Outdoor noise can be managed for indoor/outdoor kennels by limiting dog access to the outdoor portion during the night hours. Ideally dogs would have 24/7 access, but many shelters providing this type of housing in areas where being neighborly is also important will manage the dog housing such that dogs are not outside at night.



Indoor/Indoor environments can be enhanced where weather and design permit, with large garage door type doors that can be located on the room perimeter and opened to improve lighting, air quality, and to bring in a little of the outdoors - sites, smells, sounds - inside.

Why we prefer Front-to-Back oriented kennels over Side-to-Side:

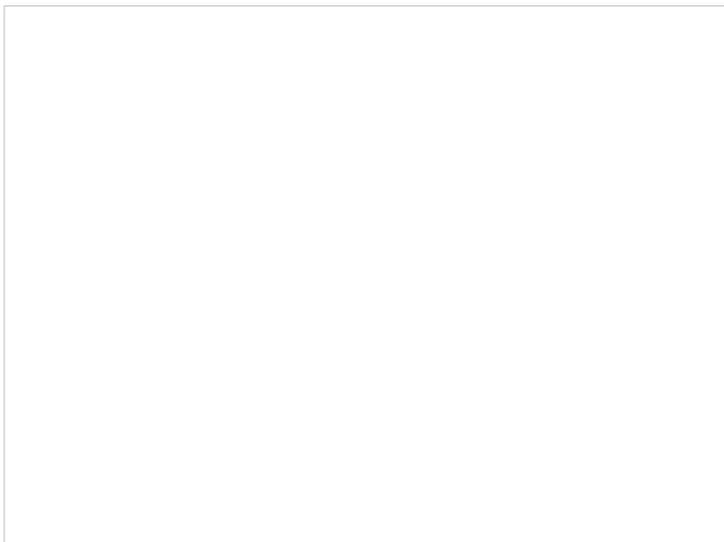
We recommend front to back orientation of kennels as the best housing experience for the dog and for staff efficiency.

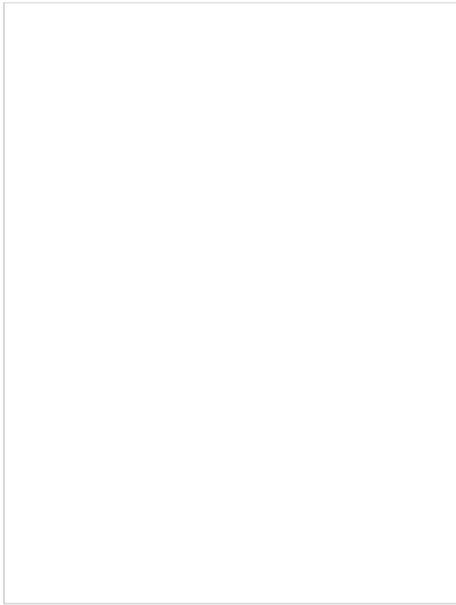
Like front to back kennels, side to side kennels also provide dogs with two separate compartments; however, these kennels do not allow dogs to be away from the side where activity may be occurring (cleaning, dogs getting moved in the aisle, people visiting). The built-in advantage of front to back kennels - a place for retreat - at the guillotine door cannot be achieved by a side-to-side orientation. During cleaning time dogs are exposed to much of the cleaning process, spraying of water (hopefully not into the kennel they occupy), noises, etc. Additionally some of the efficiency of care that is achieved in front to back kennels is lost as dogs remain dispersed throughout the room and staff need to be more careful of the needs of the dogs as they clean. If this is the only way to get double compartment dog

kennels then by all means provide double compartment kennels side to side vs not providing them at all. Just keep in mind that with side to side kennels it is important to find effective ways to provide dogs with a place for retreat.

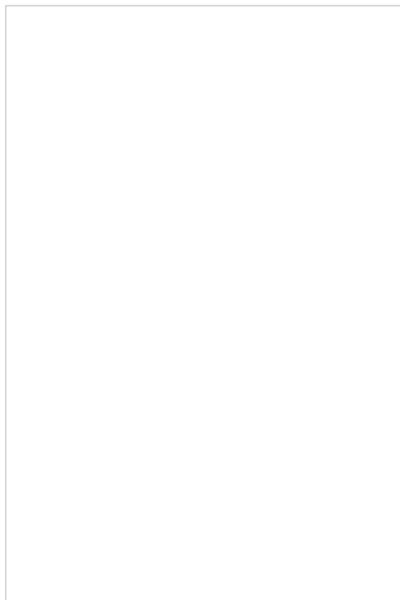
A variety of housing will likely be needed in most shelters. For some small and most medium to X-Large dogs, indoor/outdoor housing works very well, but some indoor/indoor housing will also likely be needed. Some small dogs seem to prefer indoor-only housing, and small-dog-only housing rooms are quite popular. Puppies and older dogs may have difficulty maintaining their body temperature in cold or hot environments, so having some indoor-only housing environments can help insure these dogs are comfortable. Isolation housing that is indoor/outdoor is ideal for dogs.

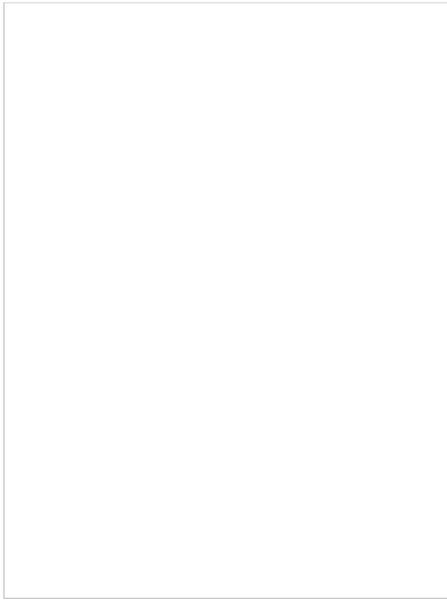
Real life rooms (essentially glass enclosed with access to another room or outdoor area for elimination) can be nice for dog adoption areas where having more control over barking noise is often desired. There are also many choices for standard kennels on the market today. Anything from basic to high end is available, making standard kennel designs an option for adoption areas too. That helps to increase variety for the adopter and can be efficient for the design process as well as daily care in the shelter.



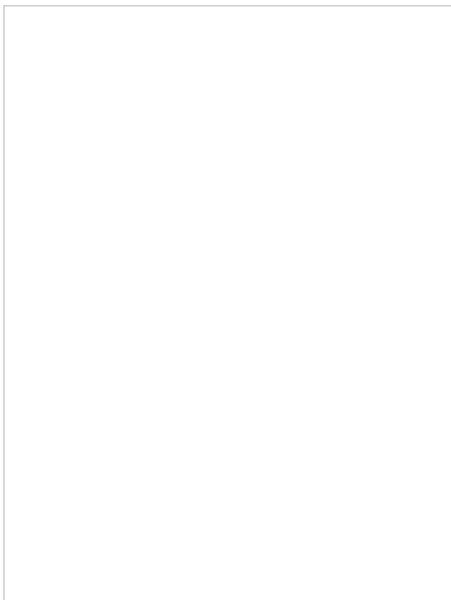


“Real Life” rooms with access to a second area for elimination.

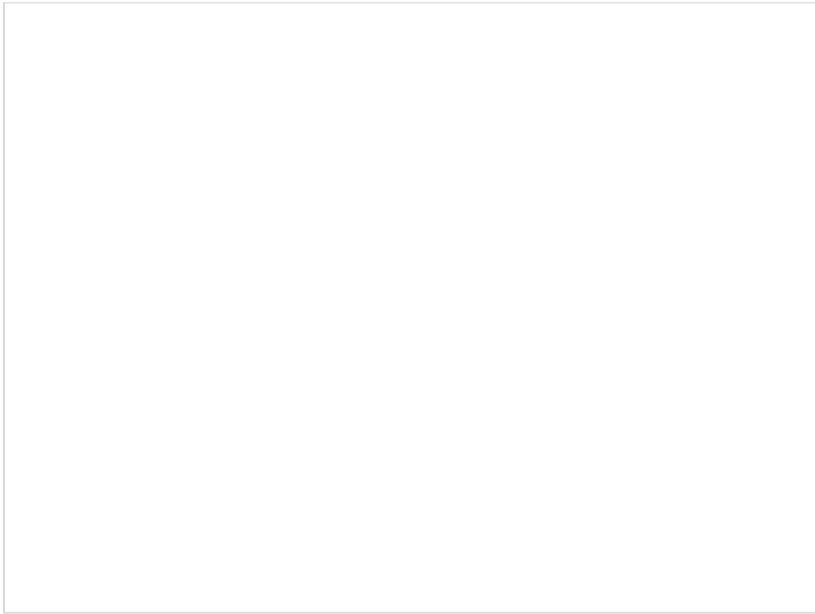




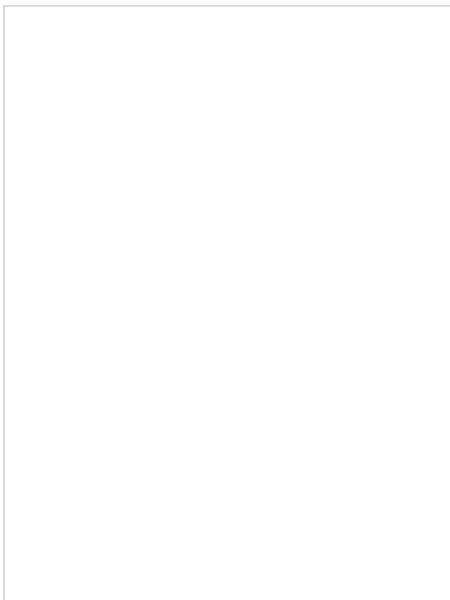
Indoor/indoor kennel (guillotine door on right picture would be more appropriate if it spanned only partially- as in the kennel on the left). Notice the puppy has eliminated away from the side where her bed is located.



Indoor/Outdoor kennel (indoor environment would be improved with a dog door in addition to the guillotine door.)



Outside portion of indoor/outdoor kennel with dog door attached. Note second story structure and yes some male dogs pee over the edge - a little design faux pas.



The bi-fold [kennel door](#) from the inside side. This dog door design works especially well in animal shelters - it is durable and easy for dogs to use.

Kennel Sizes

There is large variety in kennel size. Considerations for kennel size, both height and width, should be the length of stay dogs will be housed, the size and type of dogs housed (puppies, XL dogs, mom and pups, aggressive dogs, older, small, medium and large dogs, etc.), and the staffing needs for ease of care.

All kennels should allow human entry but larger kennels could allow in kennel training, cohousing of bonded pairs, a chair to sit in for quiet time with dog and care giver, etc. Making all the kennels the same size makes construction easier but having some variety in housing will allow housing to better fit individual dogs and dog care needs.

“As the length of stay increases (e.g., beyond 1-2 weeks), it becomes progressively more important to provide space that is both mentally and physically stimulating; alternatives to traditional housing must be provided. For animals housed long term, the physical environment must include opportunities for hiding, playing, resting, feeding, and eliminating. For cats, the environment should also allow for scratching, climbing and perching. Protected indoor-outdoor access is ideal for most species, especially when animals are held long term. Outdoor spaces must be suitably enclosed to protect from adverse weather, vandalism, and prevent escape or predation.”

ASV

Guidelines 2010

Kennel – double compartment front to back (indoor/outdoor or indoor/indoor):

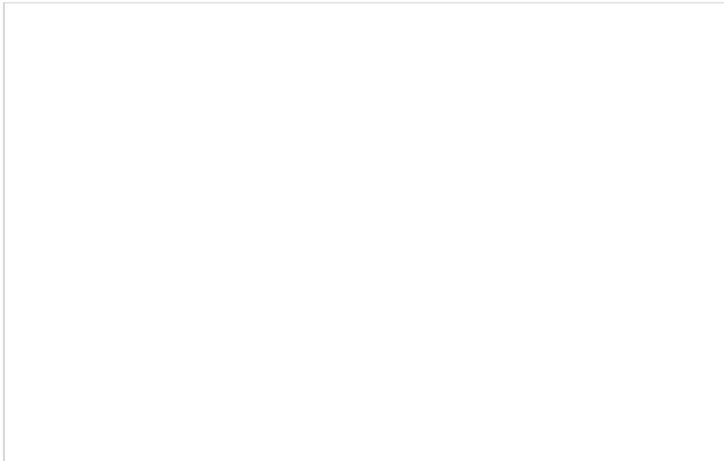
- In general a ~4' wide minimum is recommended for medium to large dogs. (Avoid widths narrower than 3'6").
- A 6' kennel width is common for XL dogs, mom's and pups, co-housed dogs and any other dogs where some in kennel time with a caregiver is desired.
- Kennel lengths vary widely. A 9' total length kennel is generally a minimum. We like 10-12' and longer kennels.

Cage – double compartment side to side:

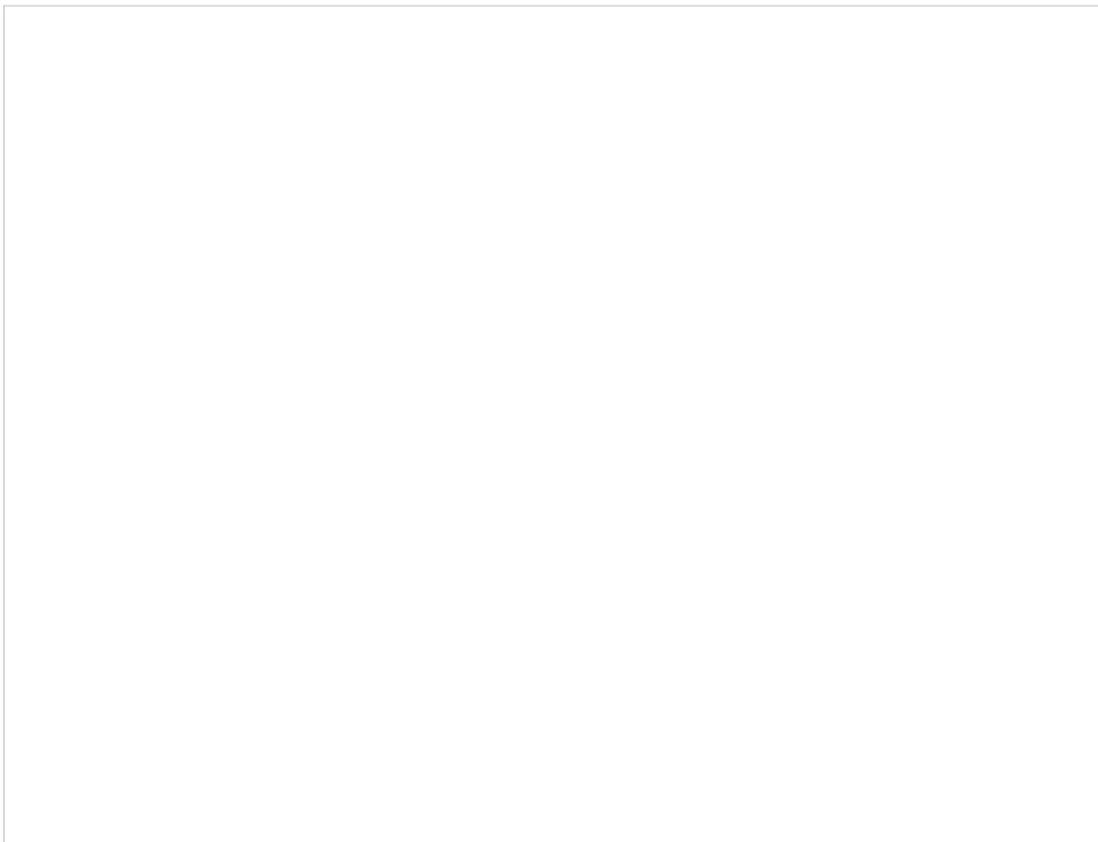
- In general a 6' wide cage – divided in half – to create two 3' cages side to side with a side transfer door (guillotine door or portal)
- Cage depth 28"
- Cage height ~30"
- These can be double stacked

Double compartment kennel and cage set up

One side of the two compartment housing unit should be set up with a bed and food/water and the other should remain accessible for as much of the day as possible for elimination needs (urination and defecation). Additionally a place for retreat should be provided such as a high sided bed, a carrier, cardboard box, partial visual barrier at the cage door (hanging towel, opaque panel), etc.



This is a 6' cage that has a guillotine door in the center. The bed, food and water are on the right side and a puppy pee pad is on the left (note that it has been used). In addition to what can be seen in this picture a place for retreat should be provided (see above).



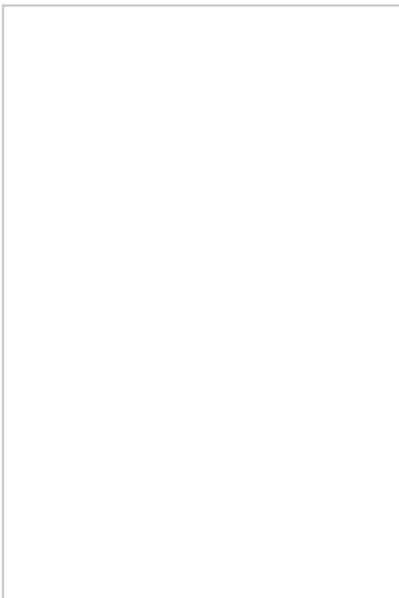
This sketch depicts various components of double compartment housing for a dog kennel. This one is indoor/indoor with viewing windows on the doors.

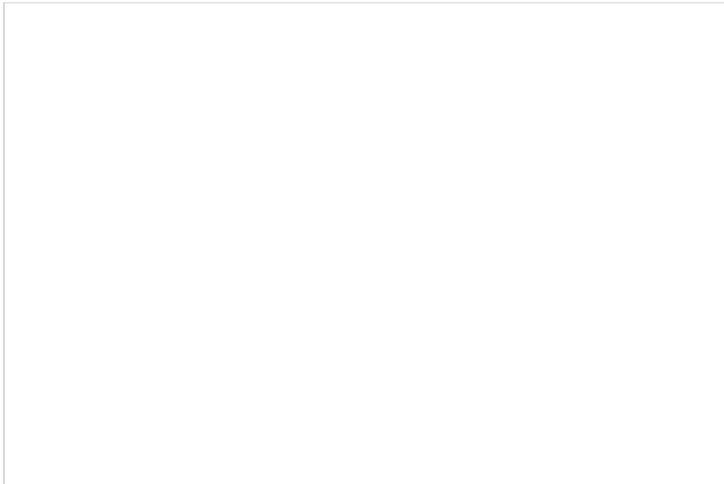
Additional amenities that improve choice and enrich the housing environment

- Toys
 - Chewing is a natural behavior for dogs
 - Studies have shown that having toys in a dog's kennel improves their appearance to adopters even if the dog is not interacting with the toy(s)



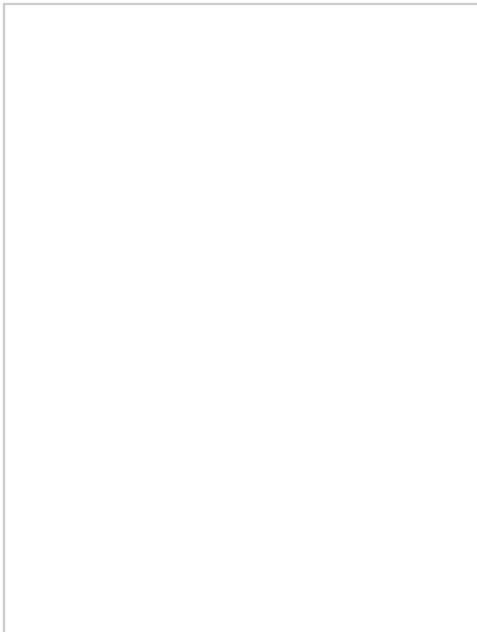
- Elevated resting area
 - Many dogs, just like cats, enjoy elevated places to rest upon and perhaps get a view from above – though it may not be far above

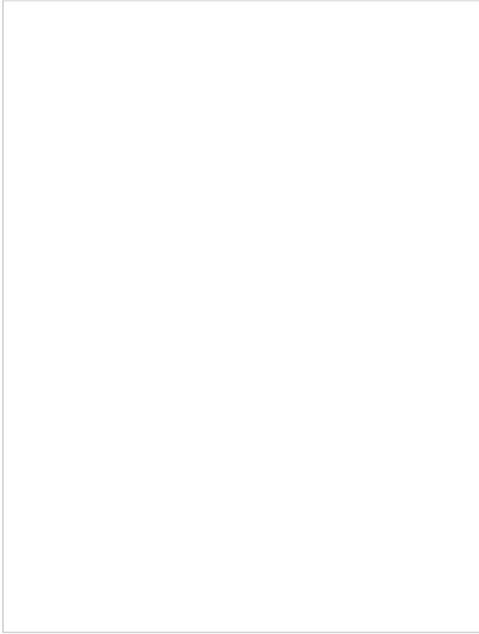




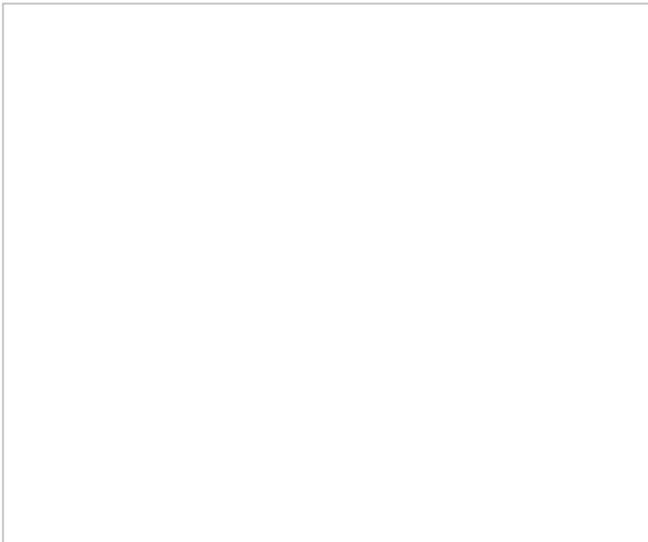
Small dogs sharing an elevated bed

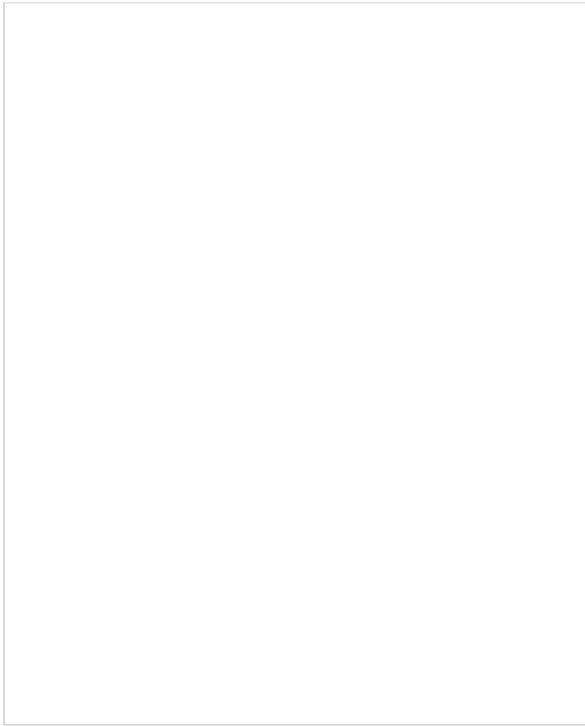
- View of outdoors
 - Provides visual enrichment and choice of what to look at



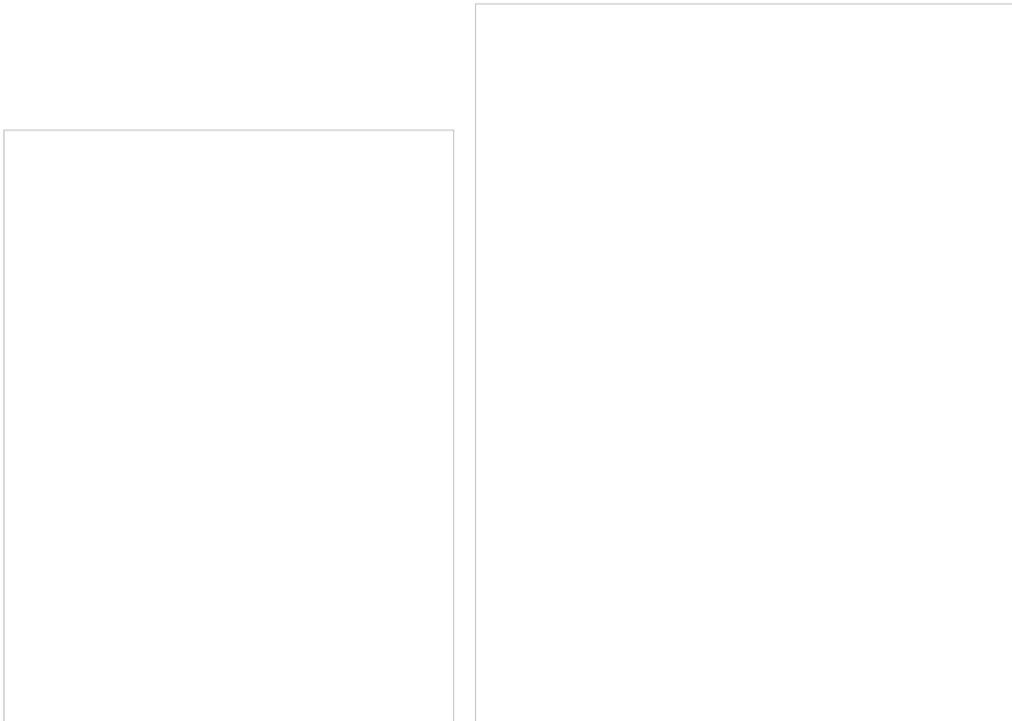


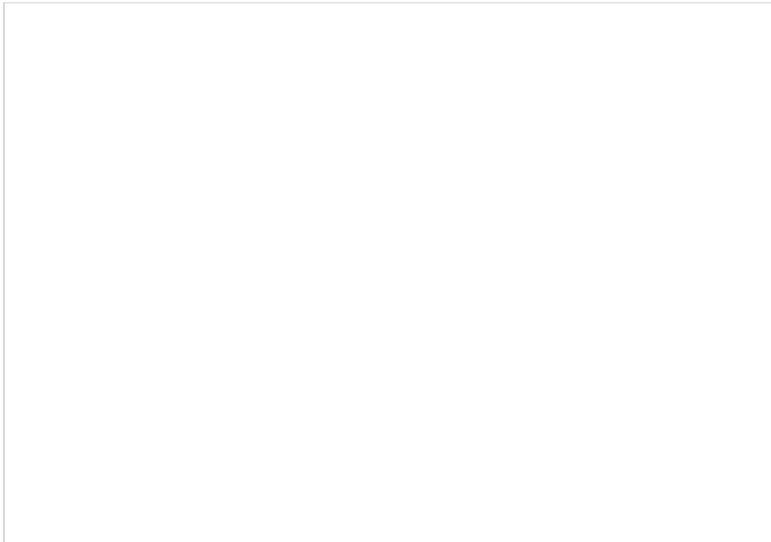
- Place for retreat
 - Carriers and hiding boxes work well to provide this





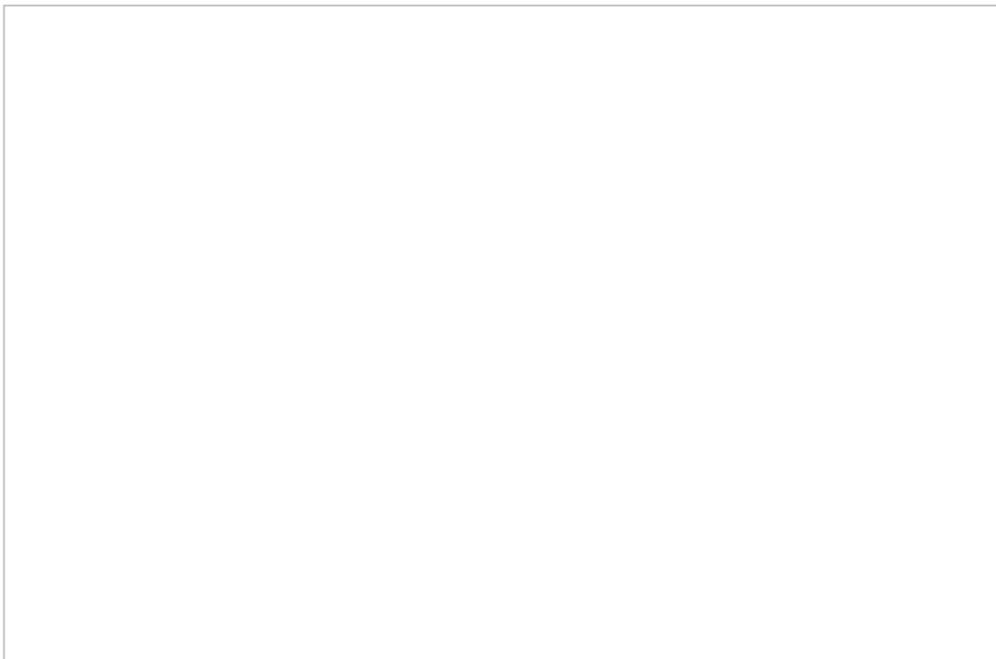
These are easy solutions for improving the kennel environment for dogs that need a place for retreat. A dog carrier (left) can make a kennel more cozy and warm. The box on the right is a small deck box with a hole cut into the side. The lid is hinged and opens for easy cleaning. The top is sturdy enough for a dog to perch or a person to sit on.





A high-sided bed can provide comfort and a place for retreat while providing caregivers the ability to easily observe.

- Partial wall guillotine vs full wall guillotines

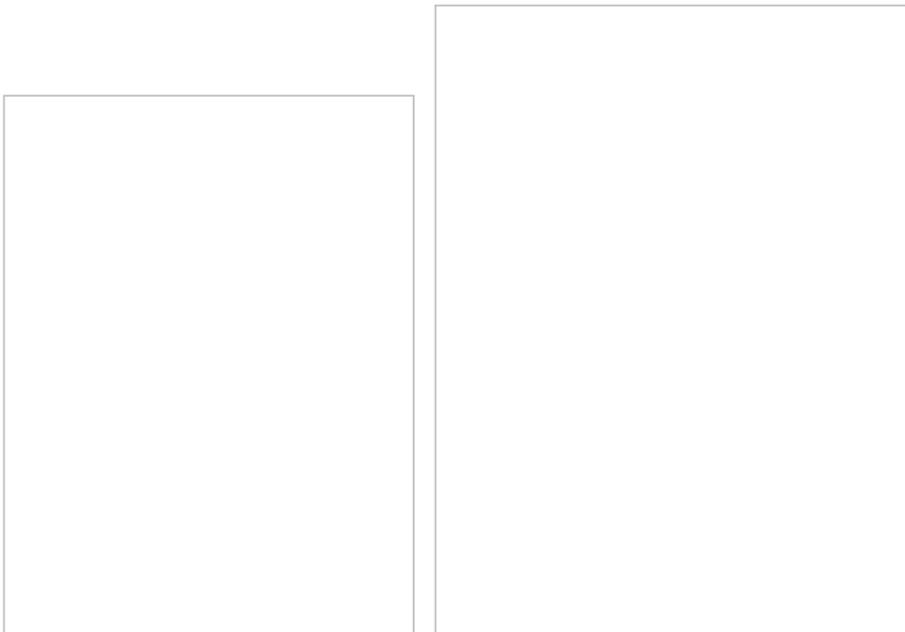


Some kennels provide full width guillotine doors as shown above. This type of guillotine door does not provide dogs with a built in place for retreat. Notice the dogs in the left and middle kennels. They have moved to the far side of their kennels and are not interested in human contact. The dog in the center was trying to hide but remained exposed in her kennel.



This dog is uncertain of his new visitor but because the guillotine door takes up only a portion of the center dividing wall there are built in places for him to retreat to if he so chooses.

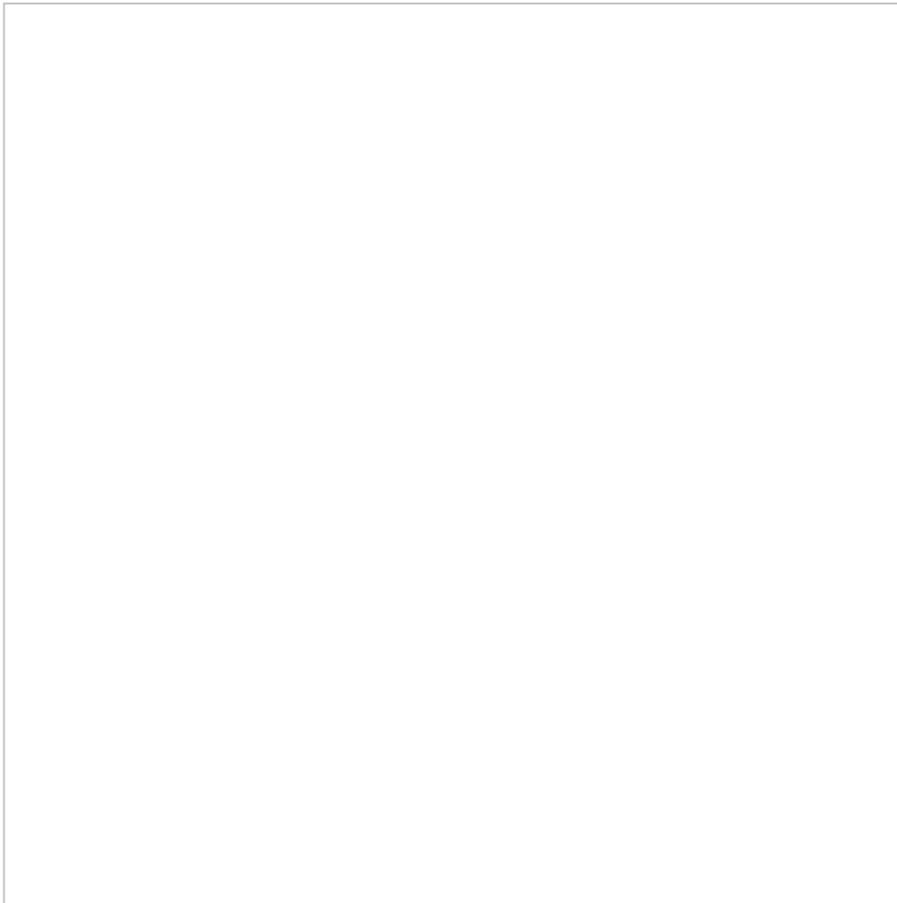
- Treat buckets for more visitor interaction and a quieter kennel



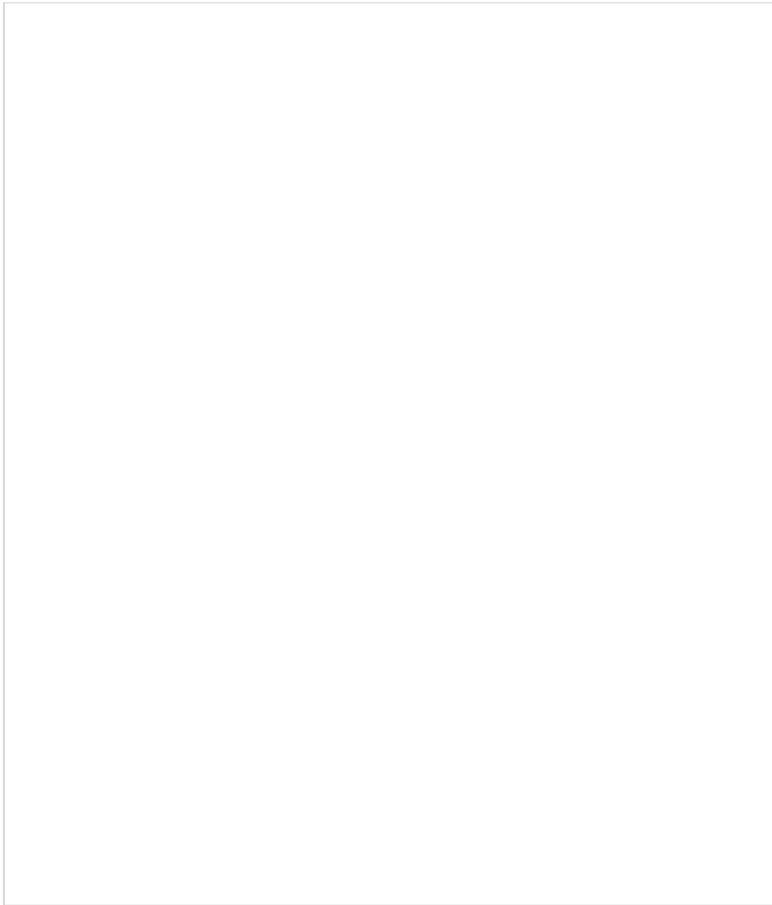
The blue treat bucket holds treats for the day that the public can give the dog. They learn very quickly how this all works. Use of treat buckets can improve the kennel environment for both the dogs and their visitors (potential adopters, staff and volunteers) by greatly reducing barking and encouraging positive interactions.

Kennel/Room configuration considerations

- Major animal movement and people movement pathways should not occur in front of kennels (or behind kennels for that matter)
 - Use of aisles outside of kennel rooms works very well to keep most movement away from the actual kennels
- Design for short pathways in front of kennels whenever possible
 - Making breaks in long rows of kennels can assist in more efficient dog and staff movement pathways and decrease the length of pathway where high stimulation and unwanted dog/dog interaction occurs
- Design for within room major pathways to occur perpendicular to kennels (at the end of the row of kennels as opposed to in front of the kennels)
- Setting up quiet space within the kennel
 - Provide space within the kennel that has little or no people or dog traffic for most of the day to provide dogs with more choices in their housing space
 - An added benefit is that the bathroom side of the kennel remains less prominent in the shelter experience of a visitor
 - In rooms with double rows of kennels set up the center aisle as “quiet space”

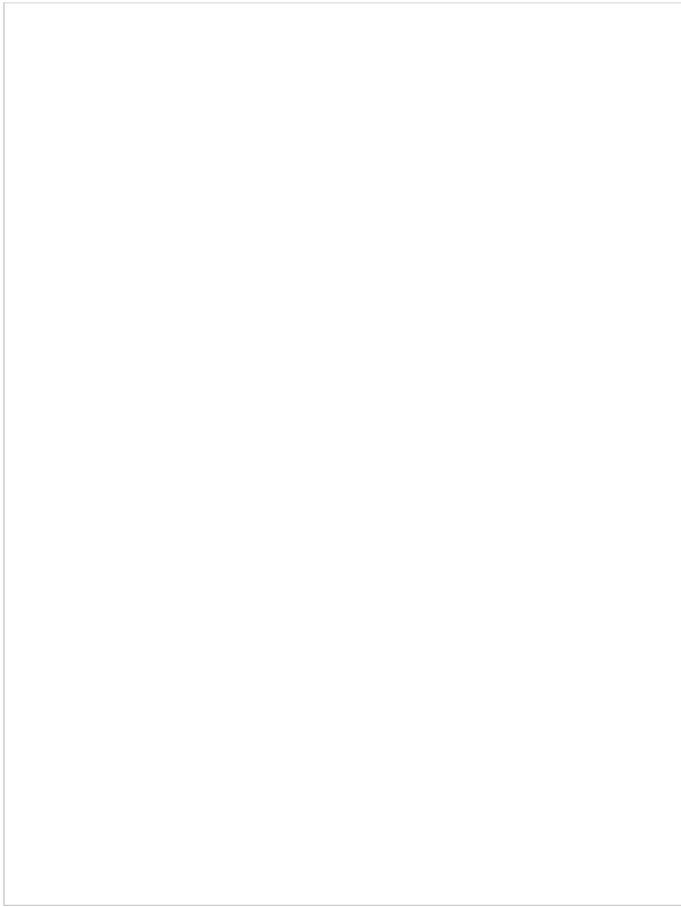


- In rooms with a single row of kennels a similar set up could be attained



Note: Public looking for lost dogs should have access to both the front and the back of the kennels to insure they do not miss seeing their dog if they are not on the public side of the kennel.

- Use partial visual barriers on the kennel doors to further provide retreat space and help to provide comfortable kennel environments
 - It is acceptable to set up kennels that face each other as long as care is taken in providing partial visual barriers, manage reactive individuals and have housing available for dogs that do not do well in the shelter environment (foster or alternative housing) and use techniques to reduce stimulation (room configuration, animal and people pathways, in kennel amenities that provide choice, etc.)
 - Kennel door with built in partial visual barrier:



The frosted panel provides a partial visual barrier and allows dogs more choice in their kennel environment and a place for retreat. The open bars provide the ability to ventilate the kennel as well as allowing interaction to occur between a dog and potential adopters. The viewing window provides some clear viewing space unimpeded by bars.