

Purrrfectly legal

The best little cat house in Carroll County

By Jennifer Archibald
Staff writer

Jim and Jo Delaplane said they had a lot of fun telling people they were building a cat house on their rural Flora property.

"You should have seen their faces," Jo said. The Delaplans explain that they are tearing down their 150-year-old barn, which will leave no home for their barn cats. So this summer, Jim and a neighbor, Terry Bollenbacher, decided to build a cat house.

Jim originally had thought he would just build a small wood structure, but as they talked about it, the scope of the project kept expanding. Terry said he had roof and siding scraps from the barn on his property, so they decided to use those.

The finished product is a luxury residence for cats, with red metal siding, a green metal roof, and white trim. It's fully insulated, and has a door that can be latched in cold, blustery weather. There is a small two-way door for the cats to get in and out. For added comfort, a remnant from an old mattress cover is on the floor. Jim even added a cat toy – a ball on a string, suspended from the ceiling.

The structure is so nice that Terry's wife, Tammy, said they should put a sign on it that says, "Hilton."

Jim says he's not sure what the dimensions turned out to be, but he is 6'2" and he can crawl into the house. He had to do that to install the cat toy, and he said he'll probably clean the house out from time to time.

The Delaplans said they

don't know exactly how many cats they have because they come and go.

"We probably have seven or eight adult cats, plus some kittens," she said.

"When the barn is down, we thought they might all leave," Jo said. So they decided to entice them to stay with the cat house. The cats earn their keep by keeping the mice away.

The new house has attracted some unwanted guests – skunks. So far, Jim has had to scare two away.

"The cats didn't seem to mind them though," Jo said.

As word gets around, and the weather gets colder, more cats could come around.

"We might have to build on an addition!" Jim said.

Jo used to feed the cats at the barn in the evening, but now she feeds them at the cat house, to get them used to it.

"They're not sleeping in it yet," Jo said. "With all the work the men put into it, I hope the cats sleep there this winter."



Feline 'Hilton'

Jim Delaplane, pictured, and Terry Bollenbacher built this luxurious cat house for the Delaplans' barn cats. The Delaplans' barn is being torn down, which means a forced eviction for the cats. With the new structure, the cats won't have to be homeless. Although the house is top of the line (for outside cats), it was built entirely with scrap materials. Comet photos by Jennifer Archibald

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