GIMME SHELTER CAT BLANKETS

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Ideas for Knitting Small Blankets for Cats at Your Local Shelter

By Audrey Knight

Chances are, your local animal shelter houses a lot of cats and kittens waiting to be placed in good homes. Knitted blankets for their cages or cubbies give them something warm and comfortable to curl up on.

Here, I've put together some ideas for making little blankets. I've paired yarn weights with stitch patterns that knit up into thick, cushioned blankies. They are quick and easy to make, perfect for social knitting with friends, or as a project for a beginner. I'll add to the stitch and project list as time goes on and I come across more stitch patterns that work well with bulky and super bulky yarns. I've tried a bunch of different yarns, and have narrowed the list down to the ones that I tested and that have worked well so far. I'll add to the list as I find yarns that work out.

Cat blankets should be made from yarn that is machine washable and dryable. (Please note, some of these yarns specify machine dry low; it might be best to experiment first with these to see if they will stand up to machine wash on higher heat too.) The best yarns will be smooth (so the cats' claws don't get caught), plied (for durability) and not too scratchy. To give the blankets enough thickness, the cats and I found super bulky to be the ideal weight for simple stitch patterns. Bulky works well for super-dense stitch patterns.

The stitch pattern should allow the blanket to lie flat.

Needles need to be circular, since straights aren't long enough.

"Twiddle" enjoys his Double Seed blanket

"Minnie" loves kneading her Double Thick blanket

SUGGESTED YARNS

NOTE: I recommend machine washing and machine drying your cat bed once before donating it. When washing, give the blankets a final rinse so there's no soap residue that can irritate their skin. In the dryer it's good to avoid any kind of softeners that might leave chemicals behind.

SUPER BULKY:

Lion Brand Hometown USA (Solids: 5 oz. (142 g), 81 yd. (74 m); Multis, Tweeds, Neons, and Twists: 4 oz. (113 g), 64 yd. (59 m); Solids, Multis, Neons and Twists: 100% Acrylic; Tweeds: 94% Acrylic, 6% Rayon)
9 stitches x 12 rows = 4" (10 cm) on size 13 (9mm) needles

Lion Brand Wool-Ease Thick & Quick (Solids, Heathers, Twists, Tweeds: 6 oz./170g (106 yd/97 m)) (Prints, Stripes: 5 oz./140g (87 yd/80 m) (Solids, Heathers, Twists, Prints, Stripes: 80% Acrylic, 20% Wool. Wheat & Wood: 86% Acrylic; 10% Wool; 4% Rayon.Oatmeal & Barley & Grey Marble: 82% Acrylic; 10% Wool; 8% Rayon.)
9 stitches x 12 rows = 4" (10 cm) on size 13 (9 mm) needles

Plymouth Encore Mega or Mega Colorspun (64 yd/100g, Mega: Mega 75% Acrylic, 25% Wool; Colorsupn: 80% Acrylic, 20% Wool)
8 sts = 4" on size 15 needles

BULKY:

Cascade Cherub Chunky (137 yd/100g; 55% Nylon, 45% Acrylic)
14 sts = 4" on size 10 needles

Cascade Big Wheel (203 yd/200g; 100% Acrylic)
10 - 12 = 4" on size 11-13 needles

Lion Brand Tweed Stripes (3.00 oz./85 g (144 yd/132 m); 100% Acrylic)
14.5 stitches x 18 rows = 4" (10 cm) on size 10 (6 mm) needles

Plymouth Encore Chunky and Encore Chunky Tweed (143/100g; Chunky: 75% Acrylic, 25% Wool; Chunky Tweed: 75% Acrylic, 22% Wool, 3% Rayon)
14 sts = 4" on size 10 needles

FINISHED MEASUREMENTS (after washing and drying):

Note: In a shelter environment, the cat blanket may need to fit into the bottom of a cage. The size might vary depending on how your shelter will use the blanket, but a good starting point is:

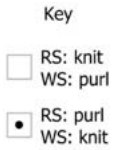
15" x 20" or the size that fits your local shelter's cages or cubbies.

STITCH PATTERNS

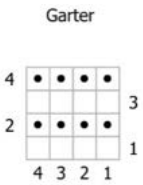
Notes:

1. *All of these stitch patterns lie flat.*
2. *The stitch patterns give a cushioned effect to protect the cat from the hard cage floor, and for the ideal snuggle factor.*
3. *It may sound silly to do a gauge swatch for a cat blanket, but I recommend doing one anyway to make sure you get the thickness you want. A denser fabric, achieved by going down a needle size, may be preferable to the gauge listed by the manufacturer. Once you do a swatch you like, you can then determine the number of stitches you'll need to cast on.*
4. *Always cast on loosely. While some people do this by casting on to a needle size larger, I prefer to use the needle size I'll be using for the project, leaving a good amount of space between the stitches as I cast them on.*

STITCH PATTERNS THAT WORK WELL WITH SUPER BULKY YARN

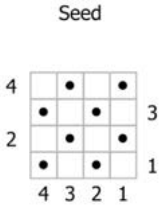


Garter:
Cast even or odd number of sts.
Knit every row

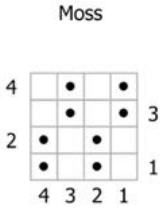


Seed:
Cast on an even number of sts.
Row 1: K1, p1 across.
Row 2: P1, k1 across.

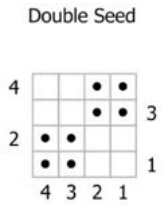
or cast on an odd number of sts
Every row:* K1, p1; rep from * to last st; k1.



Moss:
Cast on an even number of sts
Row 1: K1, p1 across.
Row 2: K1, p1 across.
Row 3: P1, k1 across.
Row 4: P1, k1 across.



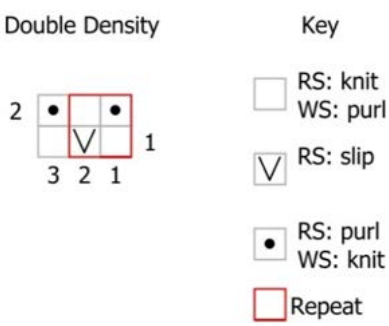
Double Seed:
Cast on a multiple of 4 sts.
Row 1: K2, p2 across.
Row 2: K2, p2 across.
Row 3: P2, k2 across.
Row 4: P2, k2 across.



STITCH PATTERNS THAT WORK WELL WITH BULKY YARN

These patterns offer more density than the patterns for the super bulky yarns. They're ideally suited for bulky weight yarn, making blankets that have plenty of warmth and cushioning against hard cage bottoms.

Double Density (Barbara Walker calls this one "Double Knit Fabric" in her book):
Using needle 2 sizes smaller than what the ball band calls for, firmly cast on an odd number of stitches.



Row 1: k1, *sl1 wyib, k1; rep from * to end.
Row 2: K1, *p1, k1; rep from * to end.

Repeat Rows 1 and 2 until desired length, ending with a Row 1.

This stitch pattern requires a specific bind off, otherwise it will flare badly.
From WS loosely bind off as follows: K1, * p2tog, pass 1st st on right-hand needle over this st; rep from * to end.

Deliver your blankets to your local shelter. It might be a good idea to call them ahead of time and find out whether they want blankets, and if so what sizes would fit in their cages.

If you're in Northeast Ohio, the fabulous shelter Rescue Village in Geauga County will gladly take your blankets. Please bring them by the shelter during their normal operating hours. You can check here (http://www.geaugahumane.org/#!contact-us/coyx) for current hours and contact numbers, or phone them at (440) 338-4819.
You can also mail your blankets to:
Rescue Village
15463 Chillicothe Road
Russell Township, OH 44072

STITICH AND NEEDLE COMBOS I TRIED AND LIKED:

SUPER BULKY

1. Moss Stitch: Lion Brand Hometown USA; 3 skeins
   Used #11 needles; cast on 46 sts.

2. Double Seed: Plymouth Encore Mega; 3 skeins
   Use #11 needles; cast on 40 sts.

BULKY

1. Double-Thickness stitch pattern: Cascade Big Wheel; 2 balls for full 15 X 20 size (a single ball with make a somewhat smaller blanket, just right for a cubby)
   Use #9 needles; cast on 95 sts

   The first photo is in the Phoenix colorway. The second is in Austin (discontinued) and shows how nice and thick the blanket is.

If you enjoy these ideas for cat blankets, you might like to check out my book of reversible scarves. I hope you'll also take a peek at the AudKnits.com website and blog, and check out my AudKnits patterns on Ravelry. Thank you!

REVERSIBLE SCARVES: CURING THE WRONG SIDE BLUES

Do you like to knit scarves but hate it when the wrong side shows? Here's the book for you! With over 30 patterns and variations, Reversible Scarves: Curing the Wrong Side Blues offers a wide variety of techniques to suit different skill levels, or to match the mood of the knitter. You can find just the right design for the person you're making the scarf for, from simple to perfectly detailed. Even the more complex-looking patterns are deceptively simple to make. For example, the double-knitting designs require no special skills - they use simple knit, purl and slip stitches. Do you want to create your own designs? Sidebars give hints about how to modify the patterns for your own creativity. Inspiration abounds in this book, which scarf knitters will turn to again and again.

I encourage knitters to purchase my book through their local yarn store. It is also available through Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Knit Picks and many other online sources. Also available digitally.