



Dusty's New Dig

Last week, something momentous happened. My husband and I actually completed a project we started: Building a new cage—more like a palace—for our house-rabbit, Dusty.

Cherie Langlois

Wednesday, February 17, 2010

Photo by Cherie Langlois

Dusty and a visiting friend enjoy some down-time together. Last week, something momentous happened. My husband and I actually completed a project we started: Building a new cage—more like a palace—for our house-rabbit, Dusty.

The poor bun has needed a new abode for a few years now, since his old cage had become quite battered, thanks to our Coonhound mix, Pippin.

Every so often, when he's excited about something (arriving guests, food, etc.), Pippin lunges at the cage and bashes into it, barking furiously. Don't worry: Dusty has always been amazingly blasé about these doggie-caused quakes.

I also felt guilty because the old pet store-bought cage was too small, considering how much time Dusty had to spend in it. Most days, he comes out for three hours in the morning to roam the living room and cavort with the cats, but once our dogs rise and shine for the day, it's back into the boring little cage again.

We all know our animals need basics like food, water and shelter, but it's easy to forget that—like us—they also crave an enriched environment where they can DO things, not be bored out of their skulls.

Along with cleaning, feeding, and more cleaning, one of my duties as a former zookeeper included environmental enrichment: things like using a wrist-rocket to launch grapes for the bears to find or giving fresh-cut alder saplings to the beavers to chew on.

I try to use environmental enrichment here on our farm, too: scattering grass snippings in the brooder box for chicks to forage, providing my ducks with a pool to splash in, and buying my cats cardboard scratchers to maul.

There are so many ways we can make life more interesting for the animals in our care, and I've barely brushed the tip of the iceberg myself.

Back to Dusty: I wanted him to have a bigger, better, more interesting home, so we decided to make a large custom cage out of metal mesh storage shelves (see how to do this at [this cute site](#)).

Along with providing more space for him to hop around, the cage has a carpeted ramp and upper platform where Dusty can lounge in the sunshine (sometimes with his kitty girlfriend, Bastet) and peer out of our living room window.

Since we moved him into the cage last week, I've watched him excitedly sniff and explore every inch of his new digs, and he's been more active and inquisitive outside of his cage, as well.

He seems happy, and that makes me happy, too.

And yes, we're working on breaking Pippin of his cage-bashing habit.

~ Cherie

« More Country Discovery »