



CREATING CAGE CURTAINS

One of the most perplexing things that a new exhibitor may encounter is that of cage curtains, and rightly so.

The Purpose of Cage Curtains

Between judgings, cats remain in the 'Benching Area' – long rows of cages – with their owners. The cage curtains are both decorative and they provide some sense of space for the cats as they cannot see directly into any other cage. They can also be an expression of your cattery (or any other theme), serve to hide anything that you store underneath your cage, and offer some extra storage or display space (pockets, holders, etc.)

Cage Sizes

By and large, most shows in a given area use one or two cage services (they supply the benching area and judging ring cages and setup) if they do not own their own cages. Because of this, most of the time the cages used in a particular locale will always be the same size. The show announcement (flyer) must list the size of benching cages to be used. On the east coast and in the Midwest, the (double) cages are approximately 22 H" x 22D" x 44W." This cage can be divided in half and each half is considered a single cage. Thus, with these cages if you pay for a single entry without also requesting a double cage, you are entitled to only a 22" x 22" x 22" space, or one half of that cage. On the west coast, the cages are narrower but taller, measuring 27H" x 24D" x 36W" Each of these type of cages is considered one single cage.

Cage structure

The East Coast double style has 2 front doors that swing open, a top that is hinged at the front and latches (some-what) at the back corners and on the sides. It has a divider hinged to the center back that can swing out to divide the cage in half, or be clipped against the back of the cage if it is to be used as a double unit. Do plan to use binder clips to secure the cage top to the bottom across the back and also across the sides as the hooks can damage curtain material.

The West Coast large single style has one door in the center at the bottom.

Curtains

There are all sorts of curtains out there, and many of them affix to the cage very differently. We will deal with the basic curtain set up. Note: measurements given are for the 22 x 22 x 44 cage. Adapt as needed for other sizes.

Cage Body Piece – Use a piece of material at least 44 " wide (for the 22" H) and at least 90" long (2 x 22" sides + 44" width) – preferably a few inches longer to give you some room to work with, or in case a cage is just a big longer/wider. There are 2 different methods for attaching this. The simplest is to fold the 44" side in half and clip the curtain so that half of its length runs inside the cage and half outside with the ends



MAKING CAGE CURTAINS (CONT.)

on the cage floor. However, some cats like to hide underneath the curtains. If you want to prevent this, put the curtain inside the cage and pull about 1/3 of the curtain under the bottom and clip it on the outside of the cage. Then bring the top of the curtain up and over the top of the cage, and clip it to the outside of the cage. Don't worry that you have ends that don't meet or look 'rough' – your top curtain will cover that right up.

Cage Top Piece – At least 22" wide and at least 90" long. Simply drape across the top of the cage and let the ends hang down the side. This is the piece that people really see, and that exhibitors often decorate the edges of to 'frame' the cat.

Bottom Piece – at least 48" wide (you need it to stick out from the sides of the cage a bit and at least 36" long (longer if you want it to reach the floor). This simply lays underneath the cage and hangs down in front.

Divider – 22" deep x 44" long. Fold in half and drape across the top of the divider.

Material

This can be as simple or elaborate as you wish. Remember that you do want to wash your curtains between shows when you choose your materials. Supple polyesters and cottons are the easiest to work with as they are simple to clip into place. Some have the added advantage of folding down compactly for travel. Speaking of folding, take that into consideration when choosing material and choose a fabric that doesn't wrinkle easily – that way your cage looks neat when you set it up. Sheer and semi-sheer materials are good for the top pieces as they allow some light to filter through. Your cat then won't be quite so 'in the dark' and is shown off a little better. Some of the seasonal fabrics (such as for spring, summer, or Christmas) make great cage curtains – and they will be drastically reduced in price after that seasons' end!

For the bottom, you can use the same material as the body. Some exhibitors use plastic or vinyl tablecloths or material as it is easy to wipe up should your cat spill its food or water (or have another type of accident). Or, you can use a traditional cloth bottom piece with a bottom-only size piece of clear plastic or complimentary colored plastic or vinyl if your cat is a messy one. Sew or attach a pocket to the front and you have an instant storage place for your show catalog or anything else.

You don't sew? Look at materials that don't fray and cut to size. Or use "Frey Check" or something similar on your rough edges, let it dry, then turn under and either hand baste into place, or use fusible seam binding.

Additional items that come in handy

Pillowcases – use them to hold things, carry things, or cover up spots.

Decorative bead trim – cut to length, then clip on the front of your curtains with a small binder clip for 'instant trim'

Leftover material – hem and use as a clip on pouch (to store pens, markers, etc). Or make a cover to drape over your grooming stand