Bedding for Outdoor Dogs

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Q. What kind of bedding should be used for an outdoor dog house?

A. We may surprise you by saying we hate to see our clients use straw or marsh hay for bedding for their dogs. Several times, we have seen straw and marsh hay infest an entire kennel with a case of sarcoptic mange, not to mention fleas and ticks. The bacteria *Klebsiella* and a parasite called *Rhabditis strongyloides* can also be found in straw and other organic bedding. Both of these can cause disease in dogs. Hay comes from farms and if they have livestock, you can bring their problems to your door. Straw and hay are impossible to disinfect and become tracked into an indoor kennel, helping to clog drains and gutters. Wood shavings from pine and cedar trees have been used for years as bedding for everything from horses to mice. The shavings are a great bedding material because they are soft and comfortable, and they absorb excess moisture while covering up unpleasant odors. Wood shavings have a repellent effect on fleas and other insects, and they are environmentally safe when it is time to dispose of them. Another attractive feature of wood shavings is the pleasant aroma of pine and cedar. Wood shavings, however, also have potential health risks. Be sure the wood shavings come from a reputable source, and NEVER USE WOOD SHAVINGS FOR PREGNANT OR NEWBORN ANIMALS. Shavings can cause serious problems when used as bedding for a breeding bitch or newborn puppies. Wood shavings are sometimes found to carry a potentially harmful bacteria called *Klebsiella*. It is thought that this organism enters the trees or cut logs before they are processed. The problem arises when contaminated shavings get wet when used by bitches during whelping. The bacteria sometimes gain entry into the mother's mammary glands through the nipple, or into the uterus via the vagina. The puppies are infected by way of the umbilicus (belly button). This leads to a metritis or mastitis in the mother and a possible septicemia (blood infection) of the puppies. It is not difficult to treat the bitch with antibiotics, but the pups often die before anyone realizes this problem has occurred.

NEVER USE WOOD SHAVINGS FOR PREGNANT OR NEWBORN ANIMALS.

If you have a pregnant dog, or litter, or think bedding is needed for your outdoor dog, old blankets or pads which can be washed are a great alternative. Some dogs use them for toys or drag them out of the dog house, but if it is comfort they want, they will learn.

*Unauthorized use of any images, thumbnails, illustrations, descriptions, article content, or registered trademarks of **Foster & Smith, Inc.** is strictly prohibited under copyright law. Site content, including photography, descriptions, pricing, promotions, and availability are subject to change without notice. These restrictions are necessary in order to protect not only our copyrighted intellectual property, but also the health of pets, since articles or images that are altered or edited after download could result in misinformation that may harm companion animals, aquatic life, or native species.*