



Closet Rodent Rack

Introduction

In my search for what to do and where to put an ASF rack, I had an idea to build one directly into the closet in my reptile room. Nothing much was in the closet, and it was oddly sized (pretty small). I'm all about saving space in the reptile room and this presented the perfect solution to save space and keep the animals all in one room. I found the perfect size litter pans at Walmart that fit perfectly. I am able to fit 10 bins of 1.2 or 1.3 into the closet and still have room at the top for storage if necessary!

NOTE: You will need to measure your actual closet to determine the size you will need to cut down wood and screen. The instructions below are based on a space of 47" x 24". If you rent, do not build this unit into a closet...It can be easily modified into a stand alone unit by adding four 2x4 posts on the ends. I am aware of other instructions using 2x2's, I prefer a more heavy duty wood which will add to stability. No shaky rack here!

Screen Top

Tools:

Drill
7/64" Drill Bit
Stapler (I used a "slap" stapler made for roofing)
Hammer

Materials:

(based on per lid construction)
(2) 20.75" 2x4's
(2) 17" 2x3's
(4) 2.5" Screws
(1) 1/2" screening cut to 19" x 23"



Attach the wood as shown with screws to create the lid with tray. Pre-drill holes and start screws before attempting to put together! It will make it much, much easier (I promise)! Do not worry if the 2x4's move after attaching them to the 2x3's, they will be secured once the screening is on and the piece is screwed into the closet studs (or your posts if you're doing a stand alone unit).

Align the screening so that the front/back has screen wrapped around it. The screening should not go over the sides of the frame (if it does you'll end up with a scratched up wall and the top will not fit properly). Use staples to tack down the screen in sections so that it remains flat. You may need to tap down the staples with a hammer.

Check the first top to make sure it will fit snug in the closet and then continue making as many tops as you need. In this example, five total tops are needed for one side of the closet so they are at a height that I can still reach comfortably.



Base & Putting it all Together

Tools:

Drill
7/64" Drill Bit
Level
Hammer

Materials:

(based on per base construction)
(3) 17" 2x4's
(2) 17" 2x3's (for the first base only)
(4) 2.5" Screws
(2) 1 5/8" Screws

Setting up the first base will be the trickiest and will require a bit of patience. While the rest of the sections are made up of three pieces of wood, you will need an extra set of 2x3's to make the bottom panel runners to sit the first tub on. I choose to not to use hanging tubs because a) The lip on the tubs I chose isn't large enough for me to be comfortable hanging them and b) ASF's are chewers; I have plans to have made fiberglass tubs which are a good bit heavier than plastic and need the additional support. Use a level to make sure everything is straight and properly set and don't forget to pre-drill!



To know where in the closet wall you can put screws, a little bit of house building knowledge is needed. Most wall studs are 16" apart. There will be one in the corner of the closet and should be another 16" from there. A stud finder can help you locate where to drill. If you miss a stud, the sections will not be securely anchored to the wall so it is very important you know where to drill!

Because my rack is built for ASF's (and could be alternatively used for mice), I wanted as little room as possible between bin and top. I used a piece of paneling (not tile board - tile board is thicker than most paneling) to lift the top off the bin just a smidge to allow it easily to be slid in and out. The space I have between bin and top is less than 1/8".

Once you have the initial bin in, it becomes much easier to build as you go. The base is pretty much an H that is attached to the top of the section below it. First screw in two 2x4's into the 2x3's of the top below. Then tap in the third 2x4 between and screw it to the outside 2x4's with the smaller screws at an angle. I set the middle brace back 5" from the front so that I have plenty of room to maneuver water and food. This middle brace will also make the base stronger.

Repeat, repeat, repeat until you have your completed closet rack system at the height you want it. This unit is STURDY. It doesn't shake in the least and if I could get up that high, I could stand on it! This can be converted into a standalone unit by using the same steps but instead of screwing into wall studs, screw into 2x4 posts.

Water bottles or an automatic watering system can be set up for this unit. At the time of this writing I have not yet received the pieces to setup the auto system and am using water bottles.