



Chicken Coops: Choose the Right One

Choosing the right chicken coop design goes a long way toward a healthy and happy flock. Before you start building, check out these efficient and affordable coops.

by Autumn Foushée / Illustrations by Tom Kimball

Chickens provide us with eggs, meat, good laughs and good times, but in addition to their daily nutritional needs, we also must provide them with sturdy, reliable shelter that protects them from predators and harsh weather.

Chicken coops come in many sizes, shapes and designs, and can be built from a number of different materials for a number of different purposes.

Included here are several different types of chicken coops; from an economical, portable poultry shed to chicken arks that provide daytime protection to a time-tested, classic chicken house.

The Art of the Ark

The chicken ark is used primarily in situations where birds cannot range freely during the day due to predators, concerned neighbors or city ordinances. Arks provide access to daylight while keeping your chickens close to home and protected.

Chicken arks also allow you to rotate where you graze your flock. You can easily move

these small enclosures to fresh grass so birds can enjoy the sunlight and eat bugs to their heart's content. Arks work well for flocks of less than 12 birds. You can purchase arks from commercial dealers or you can build your own.

If you're game try your hand at ark building, their simple construction will make the process fast and easy. Take a look at these arks.

Top

Mammy's 1895 Chicken House

Tarter Gate's timeless "Mammy's 1895 Chicken House" is a coop design based on one built by Joy Tarter's grandparents.

The coop design stands the test of time. The original coop still stands in Kentucky, where Joy's grandparents lived.

It is easy to clean and maintain. The chickens are well-protected from predators by the strong wire mesh around the bottom and the solid-wood construction.

The design incorporates a fenced run where chickens can access the outdoors and be protected from predators.

The interior of the coop has built-in roosts and nesting boxes with retractable windows for warmth and ventilation. Via a chicken door, the birds can access the fenced run on their own. Check out the plans here, courtesy of Tarter Gate, or view and download them online at www.tartergate.com

There are multitudes of chicken-coop designs available. Use these ideas and plans to jump start your own design creativity or use them to build your chickens a safe and secure home.



Top

Poultry Shed

The poultry shed is a simple, affordable design that is easy to build.

To make the shed even more efficient, build it on skids so it can be moved easily.

Or, build it on piers to provide increased protection from ground predators and to increase the lifespan of the coop's wooden base.

Windows can be filled with pieces of fiberglass that can be removed for summertime ventilation. If you can find used windows with wooden sashes, utilize them for easy ventilation and to give the coop a finished look.

The poultry shed also incorporates roosts, feeders, nesting boxes, space for a waterer and a closed-off space for storage of feed and supplies.

The design is best for a small flock of no more than a dozen birds.

You can provide outdoor access by fencing in an area around the coop and allowing your birds to range freely—the comfort of the poultry shed will bring them home at night to roost safely and peacefully. The poultry shed and chicken ark plans are based on those in *How To Build Animal Housing* by Carol Ekarius.

Top

Read more about Chickens! Get a copy of Popular Farming Series: Chickens today>>