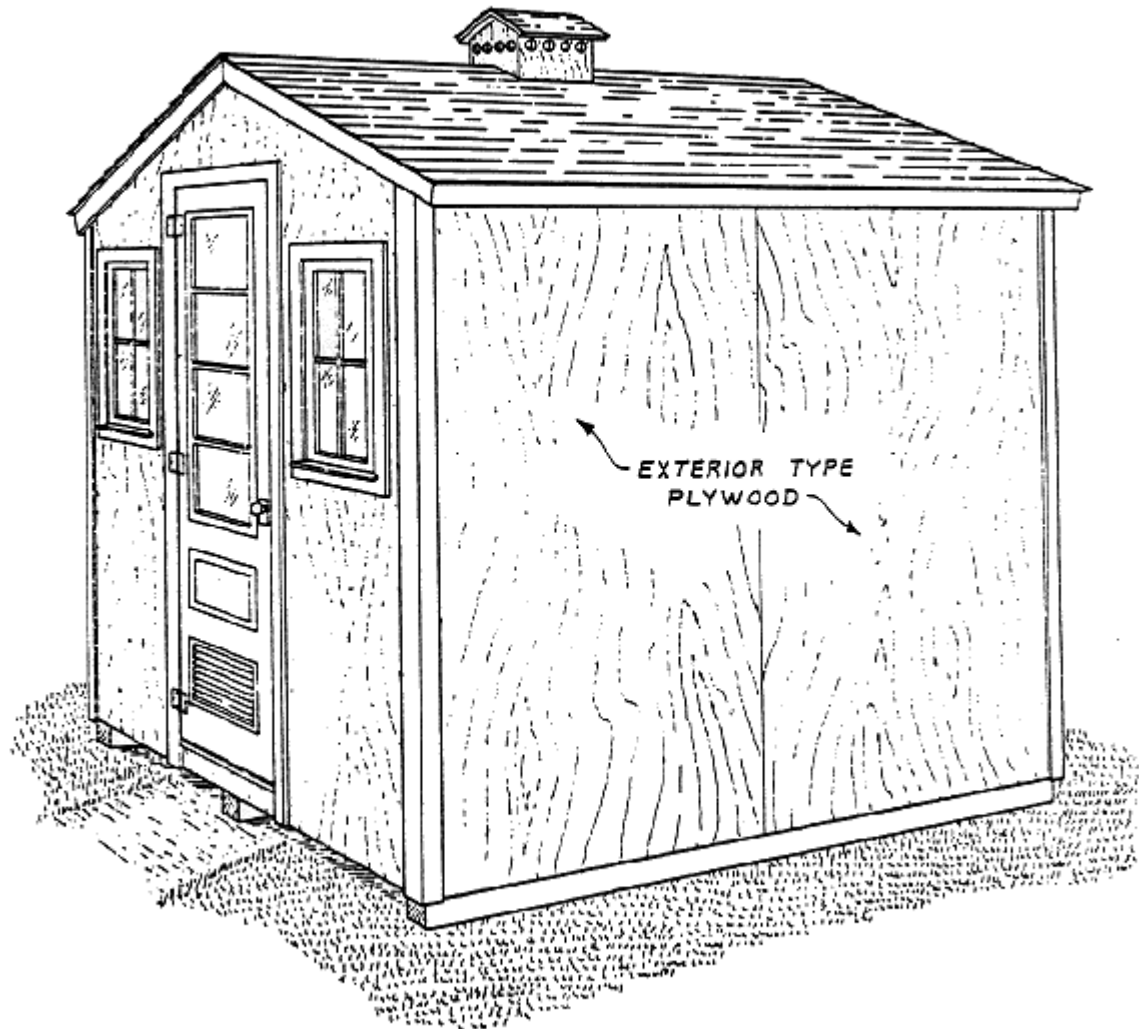


Small Chicken House

Plan for 8 x 8' Layer House
15 to 20 hens
(1 of 3)



PERSPECTIVE

Small-scale poultry coops seem to be built in almost every possible shape and size. Those building a new coop often ask for plans for the perfect chicken coop. However, few plans for small poultry houses are available. Many existing buildings can easily be adapted to accommodate poultry. Poultry housing can be as crude or elaborate as you wish to build as long as you provide the following:

- **Protection:**

A good poultry house protects the birds from the elements (weather), predators, injury and theft.

Poultry require a dry, draft-free house. This can be accomplished by building a relatively draft free house with windows and/or doors which can be opened for ventilation when necessary. Build the coop on high, well-drained areas. This prevents prolonged dampness and water saturation of the floor of the coop and outside runs. Face the front of the coop, the windows and outside run to the south that allows the sun to warm and dry the coop and soil. Allowing an adequate level of space per bird also helps keep the humidity level in the coop to a minimum.

Keeping poultry totally confined within fences and in covered runs is your best protection from predators. If you are building a new facility, consider laying a concrete floor, and start the wall with one or two concrete blocks. This prevents rodents, snakes, and predators from digging under the walls and the floors. Windows and doors must be securely covered with heavy-gauge mesh wire or screening when opened.

With outside runs, bury the wire along the pen border at least 30 cm deep, and toe the fence outward about 15 cm. This stops most predators from digging under the fence. Animals always dig at the base of a fence. By toeing the fence outward and burying it, the predator digs down right into more fencing. Some people run electric fencing around the outside of their pens 10 cm off the ground about 30 cm from the main fence to discourage predators. If your outside runs are not predator-proof, you need to lock up your poultry before dark. To prevent problems with hawks and owls, cover your outside runs with mesh wire or netting. Many times a 1 m grid over the pen constructed of boiling twine will give excellent protection from flying predators.

Build your poultry house to prevent possible injury to your birds. Remove any loose or ragged wire, nails, or other sharp-edged objects from the coop. Eliminate all areas other than perches where the birds could perch more than 1.5 m above the floor. Remove perching areas such as windowsills, nest box tops, or electric cords whenever possible. These extra measures could eliminate any injury to you or your birds and may prevent damage to the coop, as well.

- **Adequate Space:**

Birds need adequate space for movement and exercise as well as areas to nest and roost.

- **Perches:**

With chickens, always provide 15 to 25 cm of perch space per bird. Perches are not usually used with meat chickens and waterfowl.

- **Nests:**

Always provide at least one nest for every 4-5 females in the flock.

- **Easy Access to Feed and Water:**

Feeders and waters should be placed conveniently throughout the pen for birds' access. Place the bottom of the waterers and top lip of the feeders at the birds' back height. This will keep the feed and water clean and prevent wastage. When possible, place the waterer in the outside runs. This helps to keep the humidity level lower inside the coop.

- **Source of Light:**

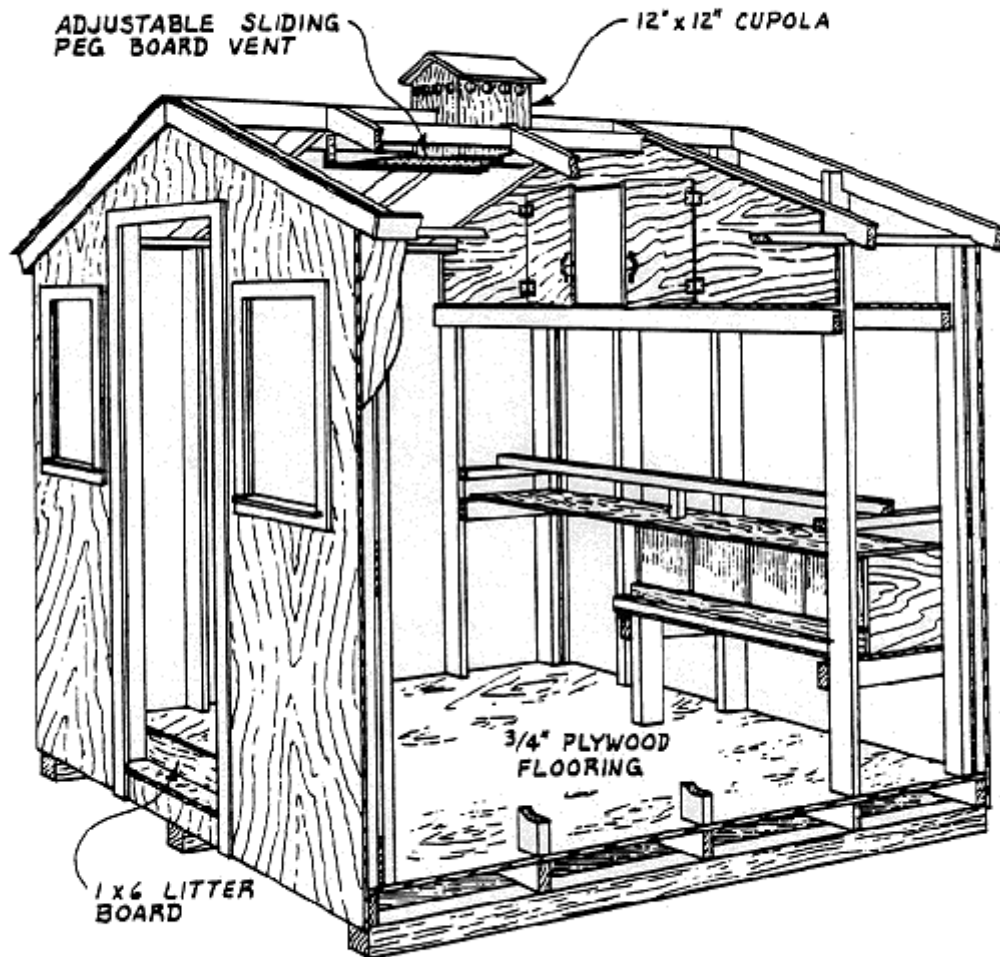
If you wish to produce eggs from your flock year-round, you must have a source of light. One light every 10 m² at ceiling height is appropriate. Most small poultry houses do very well with one light above the feeding and watering area.

Windows placed on the south side of the coop will also be a good source of light and warmth in winter and a good source of ventilation in summer.

- **Ventilation:**

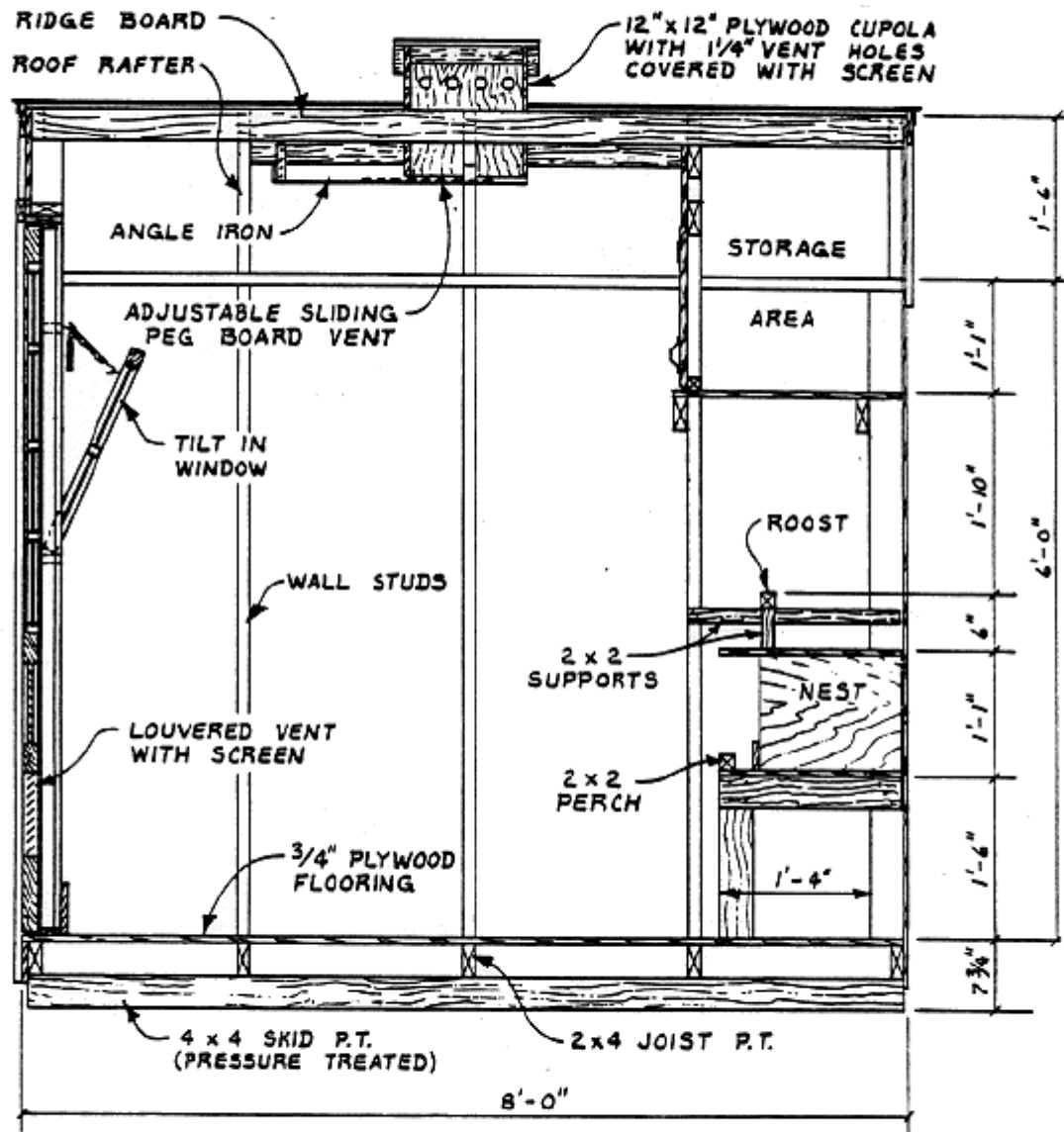
Ample air movement without a draft is essential. Fresh air brings in oxygen while excess moisture, ammonia or carbon dioxide are removed the stale air moves out of the house. Dampness and ammonia build-up is a sign that there is not enough ventilation. For small coops windows or vents on one side of the house usually provide plenty of ventilation. Well-ventilated houses must also have plenty of insulation and a good vapour barrier. Failure to insulate or ventilate properly causes moisture to accumulate on the walls and ceiling in cool weather. Poultry can handle cold very well if they are dry. However, cool and humid conditions can create many health problems. Locate openings on the side away from prevailing winds. The south or east side is usually best.

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CUTAWAY VIEW

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SIDE SECTION VIEW