



# THE ULTIMATE CHICKEN COOP GUIDE



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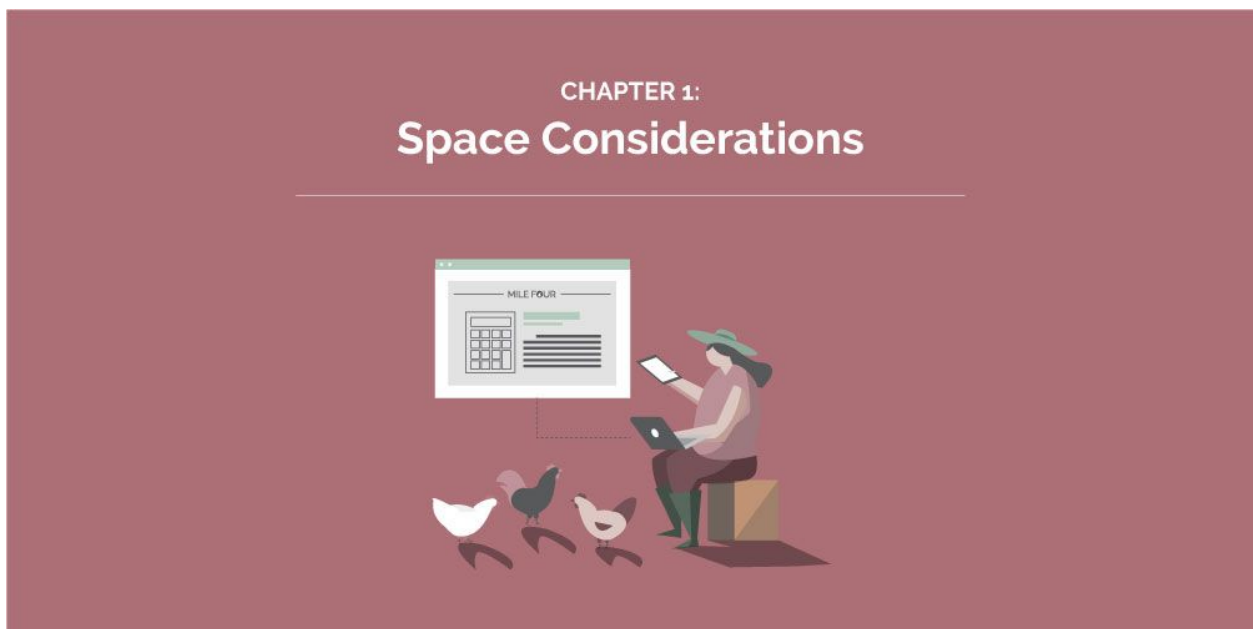
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# Introduction

If you are looking into getting a chicken coop, you've probably noticed there are a million considerations.

Do I need a run? Where should the coop go? How many nesting boxes do I need? Don't panic! Take a deep breath and close all the research tabs in your browser.

Everything you need to consider for building or buying a chicken coop is all covered here. Whether you are an expert chicken-keeper or you are thinking about getting chickens for the first time, this guide is for you!

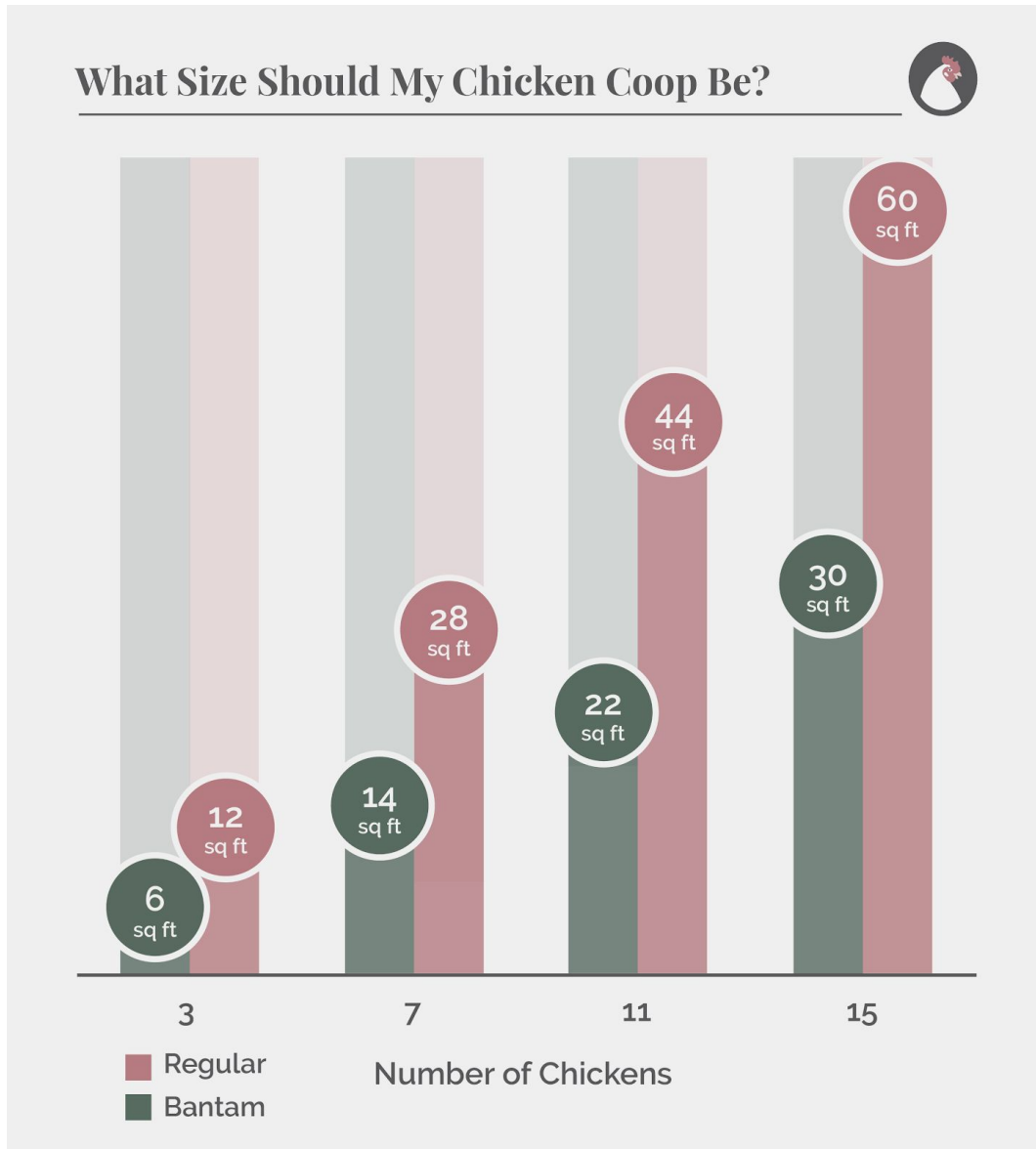


## Coop Size Requirements

The first thing to consider is the coop size. Chickens do not like being crammed in a coop. They will get angry and could attack each other.

However, when flocks have too much space inside, it can be hard for them to stay warm on cold nights.

Below is a chart to help you figure out how much space should be in your coop. These numbers are based on the assumption that your flock will be spending most of the day in the run.



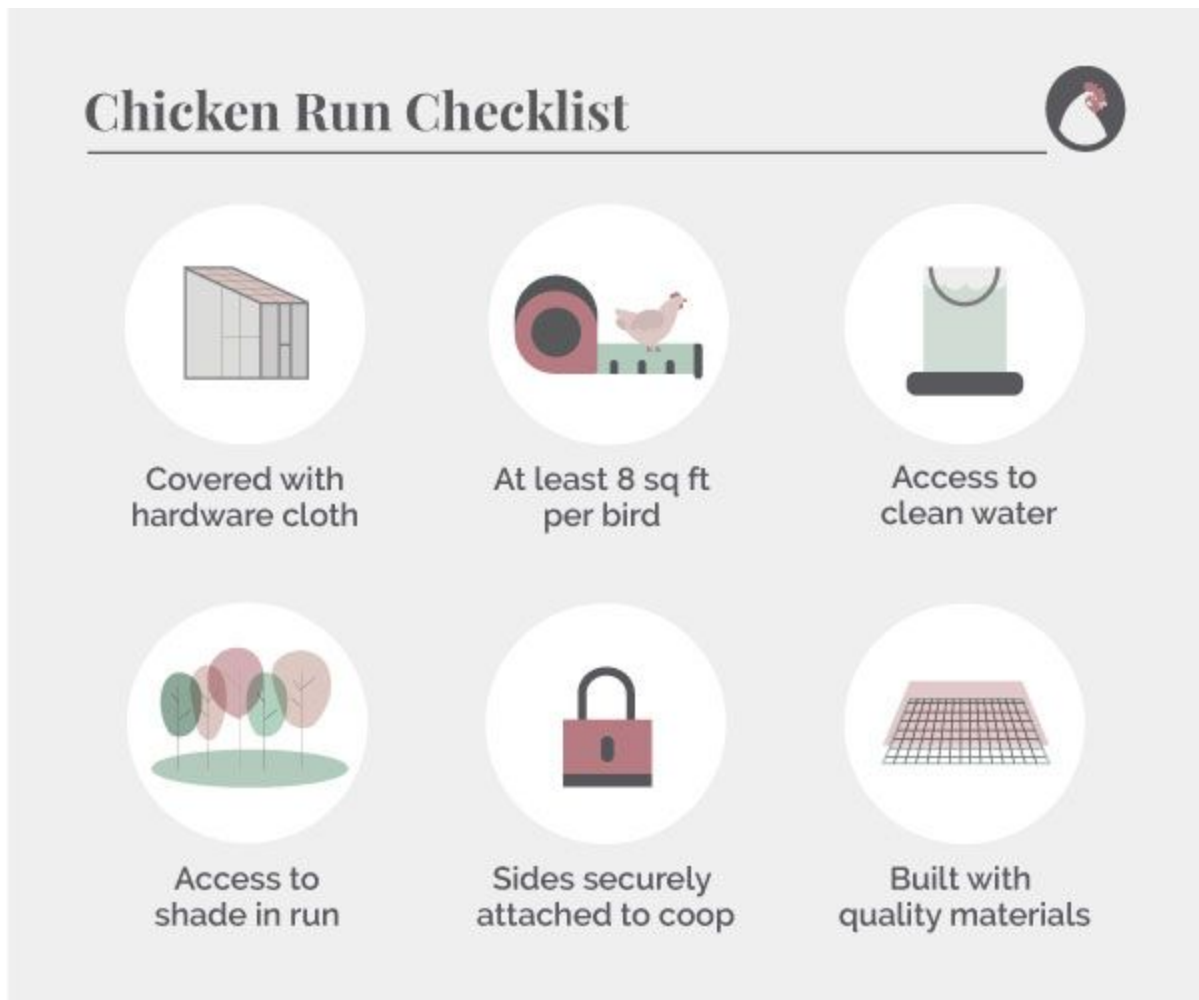
Keep reading to learn the important aspects of a chicken coop.

# Chicken Coop Runs





A run is pretty much a playground for your chickens. Humans don't like to be "cooped up" all day and neither do chickens!

Your chickens will spend much of their time in the run during the day.

There are many different ways to build a chicken run, but here is a handy-dandy checklist to follow when planning your run.



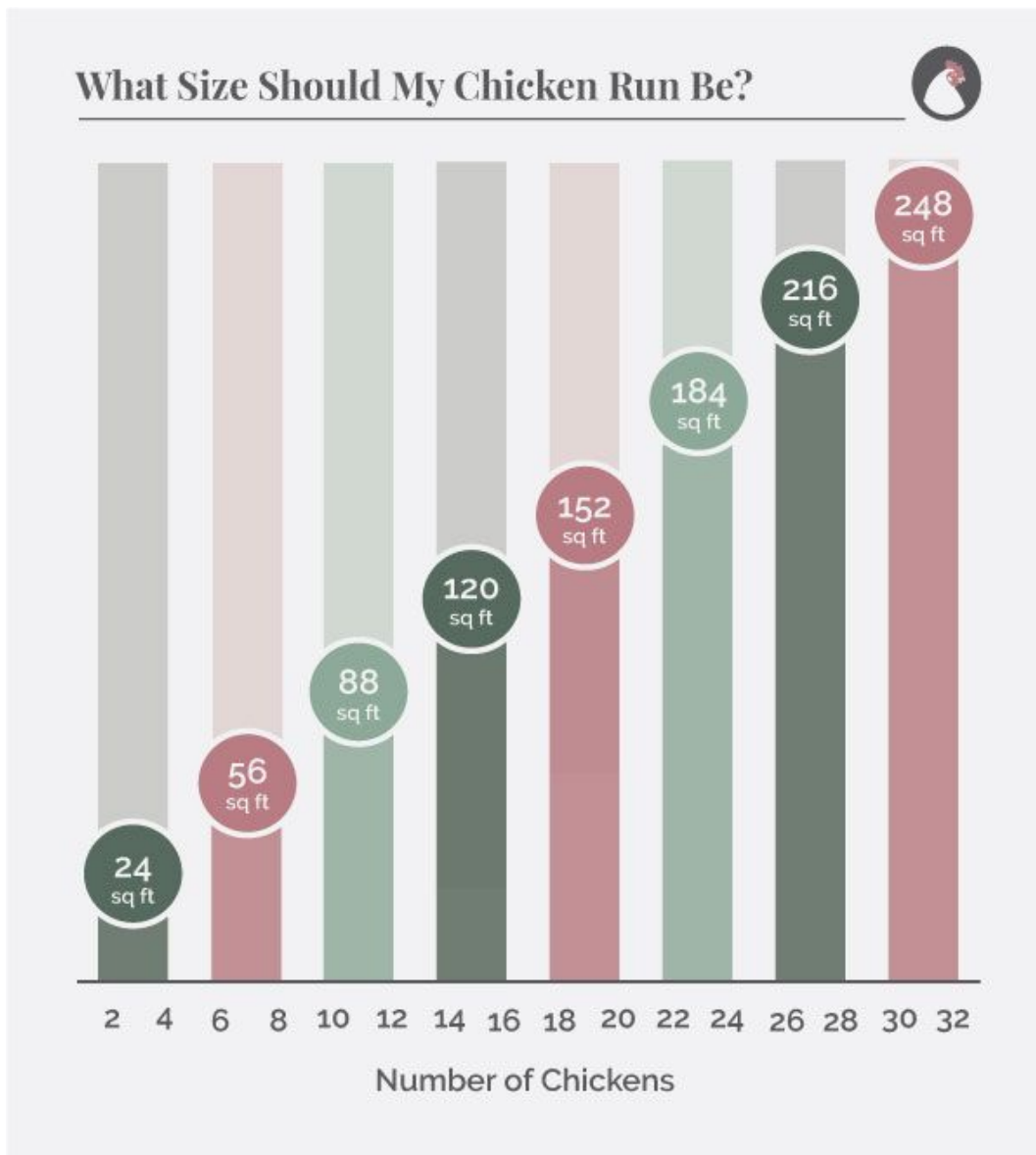
**Chicken Run Checklist**

-  Covered with hardware cloth
-  At least 8 sq ft per bird
-  Access to clean water
-  Access to shade in run
-  Sides securely attached to coop
-  Built with quality materials

Remember, chicken wire is for keeping chickens inside, not keeping predators out; so be sure to use hardware cloth or something of similar durability to protect your flock.

As mentioned above in the checklist, the general rule of thumb is to have 8 sq ft per chicken in the run.

Use the chart below to see how much space your flock would need.



Having a covered run is ideal since it protects your flock from predators, but if you are balling on a budget, you can go without. Just make sure you keep an eye out for flying predators e.g. hawks and vultures.

With a raised coop, the run goes all the way underneath the coop, which is a nice added level of protection from dive-bomber predators and hot, sunny days.



## Location & Terrain

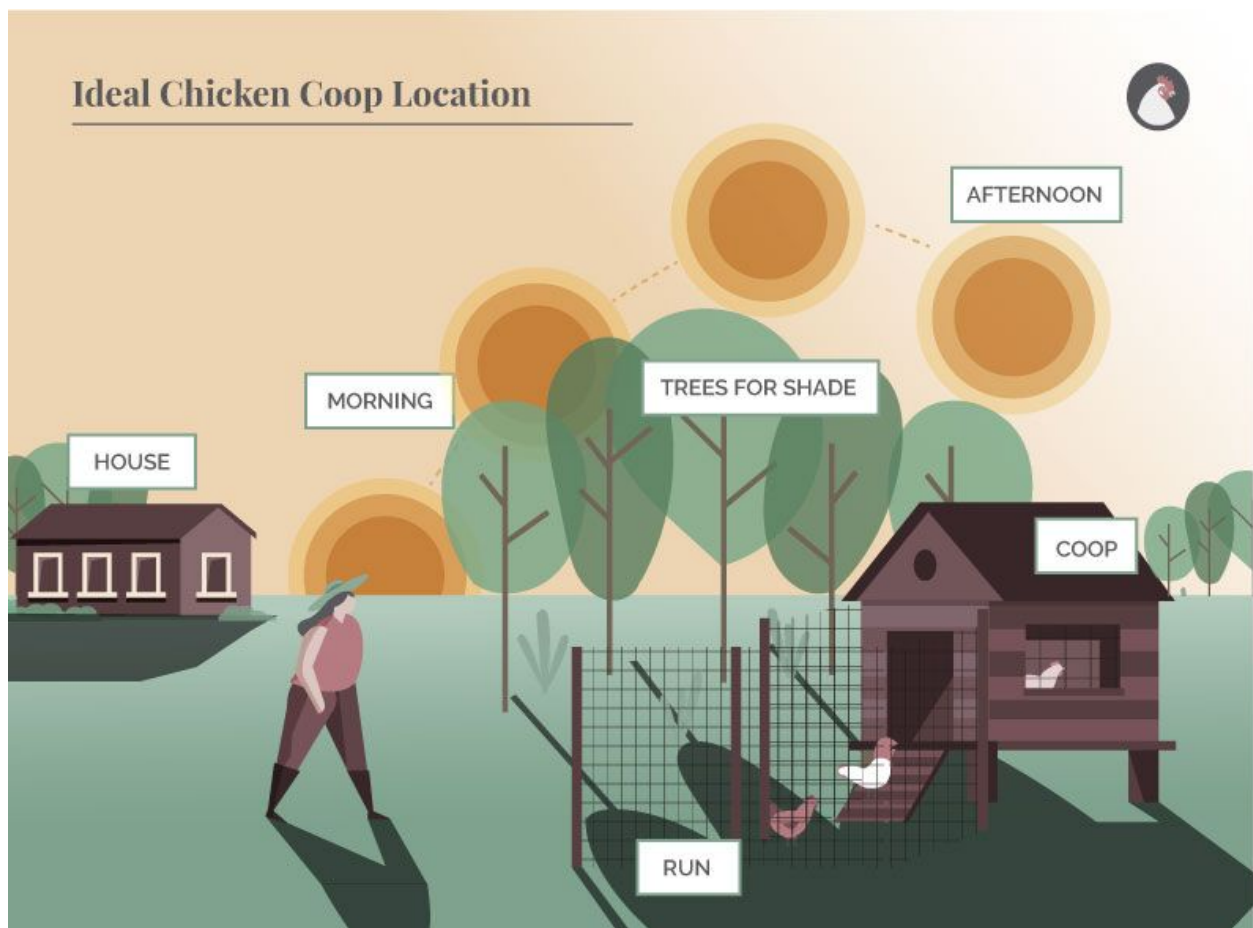
The next decision to make is where to put your coop.

You won't want it too close to your house, otherwise, your mother-in-law will come over and ask why your house smells.

You won't want it so far away that they are basically on your neighbor's property. Karen, your next-door neighbor, would absolutely speak to the manager about that.

Somewhere between those two extremes will be a suitable location.

Chickens need ample sun (for egg production) and access to shade, in order to stay cool.



Chickens were not meant for swimming, or to be wet for that matter. Thus, it is important to make sure their coop is elevated in some manner.

Either on 'stilts', or just a few inches above the ground...



## Elevated Chicken Coops



Flooding isn't the only thing your chickens need to be protected from.

Keep reading to learn about protecting your coop from common predators.

### CHAPTER 2:

## Building A Chicken Coop



# Chicken Predators

Humans are not the only ones that think chickens are delicious.

That's why you have to make sure your coop is secure on all fronts.

There are so many ways different predators can bust into your coop and cause a ruckus. Some steal eggs, some eat chickens, and some spread disease.


But don't freak out just yet, we will help you prevent that.




Here are a few great tips and tricks to implement when building or picking out your coop.

You can always add some of these features in later as you see fit.

## Predator-Proof Your Coop

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	STRATEGY	HOW	PREVENTS
	Elevate coop	Stilts or cinder blocks	Diggers
	Cover windows	Hardware cloth	Climbers & Sneakers
	Secure run	Screws & washers	Sneakers
	Bury predator apron	Dig a trench	Diggers
	Solidify coop floor	Concrete or wired floors	Diggers
	Lock coop	Two-step lock	Sneakers
	Cover run	Hardware cloth	Climbers & Dive Bombers
	Eliminate hiding spots	Remove wood & rock piles	Sneakers

## PREDATOR KEY

	Climbers/ Jumpers	Diggers	Sneakers	Dive Bombers
 RACOONS	✓	✓	✓	
 COYOTES	✓	✓		
 BOBCATS	✓			
 FOXES	✓	✓		
 HOUSE CATS	✓			
 BADGERS		✓	✓	
 RODENTS		✓		
 SKUNKS		✓		
 DOGS		✓		
 OPOSSUMS			✓	
 WEASELS			✓	
 SNAKES			✓	
 BIRDS				✓

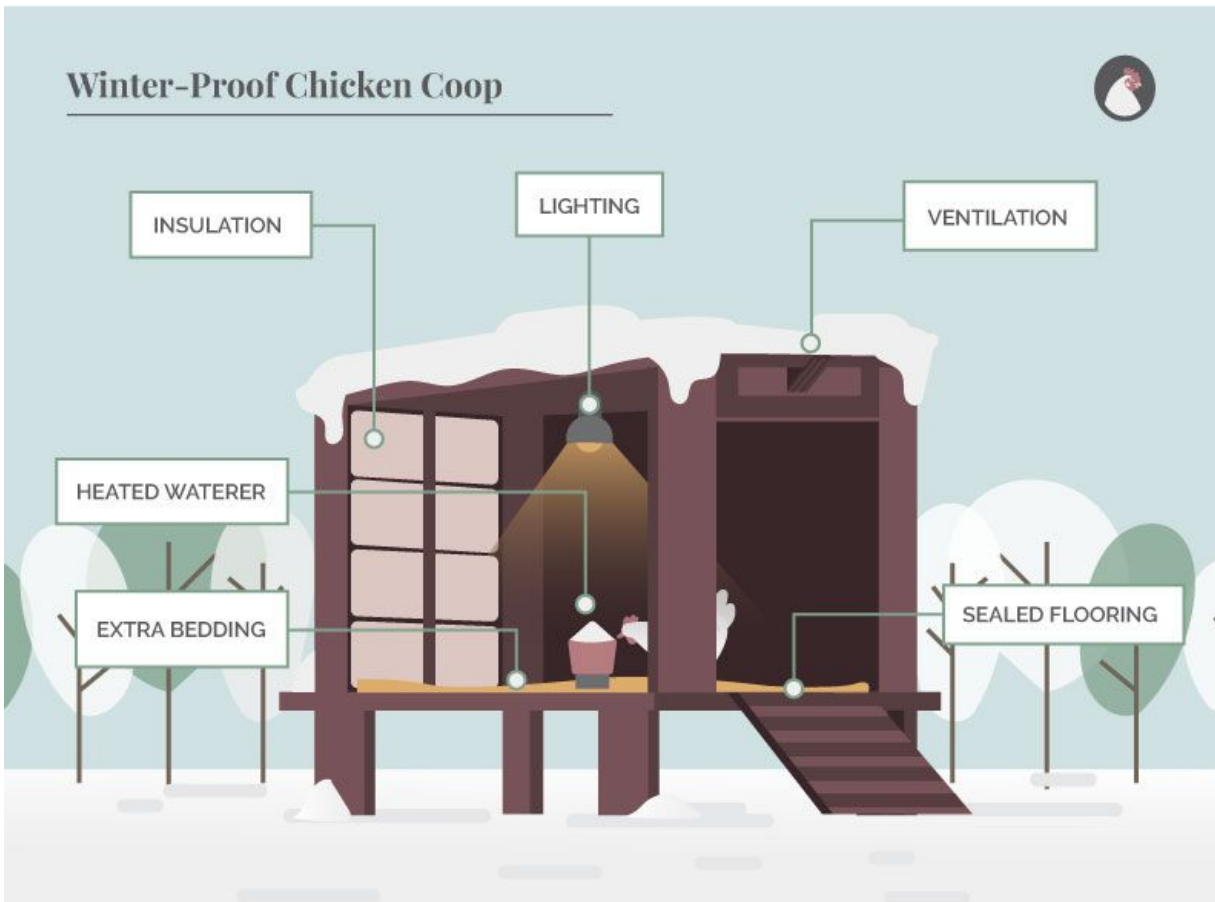
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Another factor chickens have to battle is the weather. The next section discusses how to prepare for extreme weather.

## Weather Protection

If you live in a region that gets cold winters, you'll want to make sure your coop is set up to handle frigid temps.

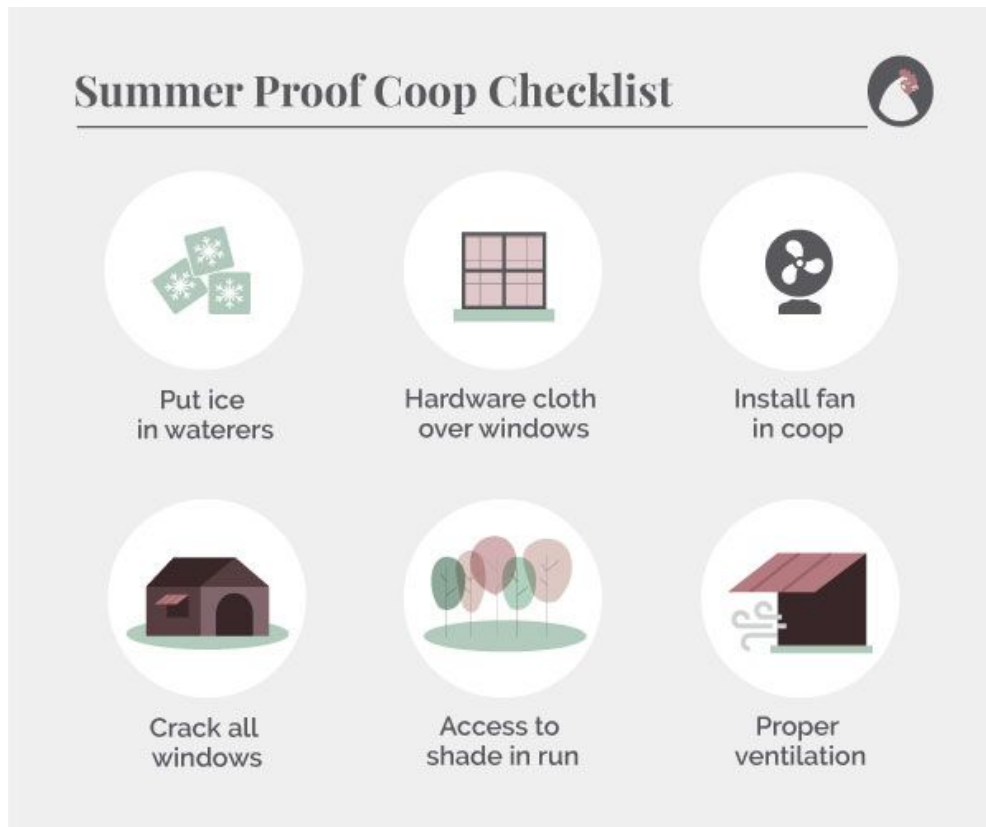
Below are a few important tactics that you can use to equip your coop.



What about a heat lamp you ask? Heat lamps are a controversial method of keeping coops warm when temps drop really low. They can cause your coop to start on fire and lose everything.

If you decide to add a heat lamp to prevent frostbite, just know you have been warned and please be cautious!

Now for hot summers, there are also a few things your coop needs to have to help with ventilation and keeping your flock cool.



You can also freeze herbs, such as mint, with treats and put them in their water bowls to keep them cool and busy.

If you live in an area that is warm year-round, you may want to consider making your coop with only one or two solid walls.

As long as you have good ventilation in the coop, summers will be a breeze.

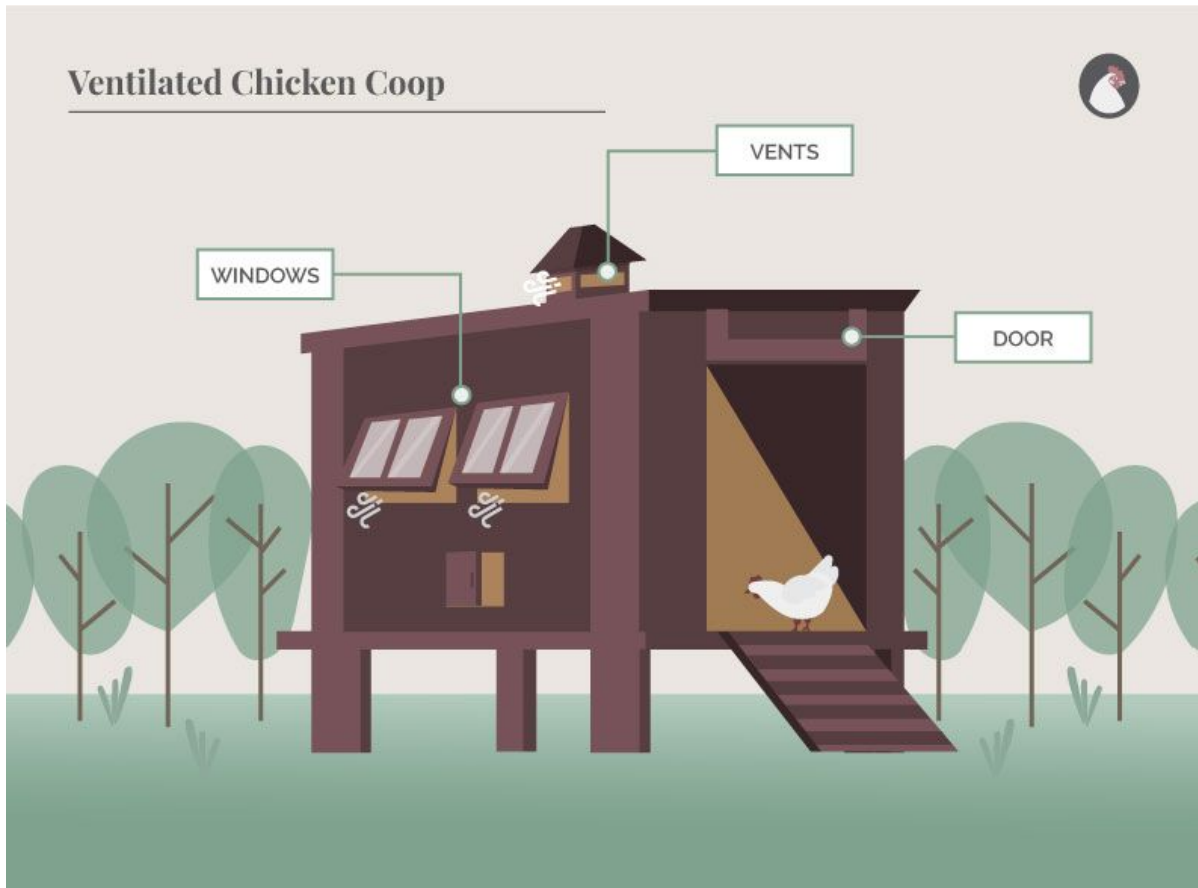
Let's take a deeper dive into creating ventilation for your coop.

# Coop Ventilation

Ventilation is super important as it keeps the air fresh in a coop, preventing the build-up of moisture.

If a coop is not properly ventilated, it will lead to respiratory issues for your chickens, cause materials in your coop to deteriorate quickly, and frankly smell like your worst nightmare.

Below is an example of effective coop ventilation.



When you crack your coop windows, this is an open invitation to predators, so make sure they are covered with hardware cloth to keep those losers out.

Ventilation can only do so much in preventing disease and health issues. Keep reading to learn how to make cleaning your chicken coop easier.

## Coop Accessibility

Chickens are messy animals. Surprisingly enough when they are sleeping, they poop. Weird right?

Since they sleep in the coop, this leads to a messy home for them and more cleaning for you.

It is important to keep the coop clean to prevent disease and other nastiness. And no you can't just call Molly Maid. You can do it!

The type of bedding you use will greatly affect the rate at which the bedding needs to be changed. We'll give you the full low-down on that in chapter 3.

Being able to access the inside of the coop to clean is something you need to consider. The easier it is to access it, the easier and faster it will be for you to clean it.

If you have a human-sized door, then you will have no problem.

If you have a smaller coop with no human-sized door, you'll need an easy-access cleaning door.



## Flooring Options

The material you choose for the floor of your coop is actually very important.

If you plan on having your coop in the same spot for a long time, your best bet is to do concrete floors. If that's not in your budget, there are plenty of other options.

There are quite a few different flooring options out there. While some materials may last long and strong for one person, they also can be a complete bust for another person.

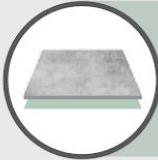



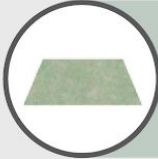







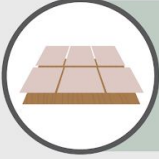

# Chicken Coop Flooring


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## FLOOR BASE

MATERIAL	PROS	CONS	MOISTURE CONTROL	RATING
 Concrete	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most durable</li> <li>• Low-maintenance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permanent</li> <li>• Most expensive</li> </ul>	Excellent	
 Wood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good for elevated coops</li> <li>• Can be protected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard to clean</li> <li>• Susceptible to mites</li> </ul>	Good	
 Bare Ground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows chickens to scratch and dig</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard to clean</li> <li>• Most vulnerable</li> </ul>	Poor	

COVERING WOOD FLOORS				
MATERIAL	PROS	CONS	MOISTURE CONTROL	RATING
 Paint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cheapest option</li> <li>Easier to clean than unpainted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vulnerable to scratches</li> <li>Unsealed cracks</li> </ul>	Good	
 Linoleum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More eco-friendly</li> <li>Durable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Difficult to cut</li> <li>Must be treated periodically</li> </ul>	Fair	
 Vinyl	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protects from moisture</li> <li>Flexible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Difficult to install</li> <li>Rips &amp; tears eventually</li> </ul>	Excellent	



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With a properly built coop, you can now think about the inside.

Read on to find out what goes inside the coop.

## CHAPTER 3: Chicken Coop Interiors

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### Chicken Roosts

Roosts, also called perches, are what chickens like to sleep on at night and occasionally hang out on during the day.

**Placement:** Chickens instinctively like to be high up to avoid predators. A good rule of thumb is to have roosts be 2-3 feet above the ground.

Since chickens eliminate quite a bit while they are roosting, avoid placing roosts over nesting boxes, ventilation points, feeders, and waterers. Consider placing dropping boards below the roosts to catch all their 'presents'.

If you have more space and bantams, consider adding an even higher roost for them. If you have a heavier breed or even an injured bird, you could add a lower roost for easy access.

Below are a couple of examples of roosts. It's good to have one or more (depending on your flock size) in the run to give them a daytime chill spot. Having one or more inside the coop is an absolute must.



If you are wondering what the sheet is under the roosts on the right, that is a poop hammock. It's a lesser-known trick to make coop cleaning a lot easier.

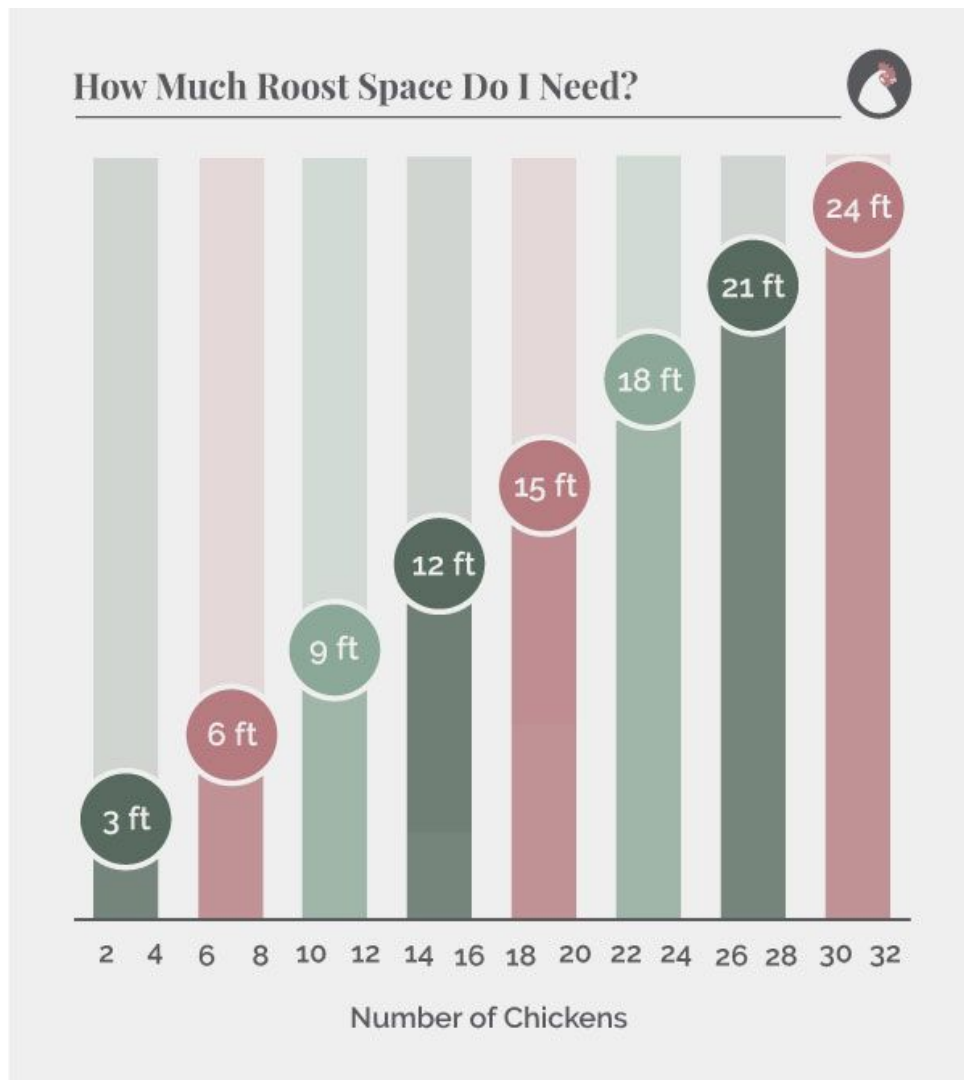
**Material:** For the material, be sure to use wood as it is durable and easy to grip. The wood needs to be smooth so no one gets their feet poked and untreated to avoid toxic chemicals.

If you buy a coop that comes with plastic or metal roosts, throw them away and replace them with solid wood.

**Size:** Roost bars should be about 3 inches thick. The smaller breeds will want roosts a little smaller than that, so a variety of roost bar sizes would be good to have.

**Shape:** Birds don't like to sleep flat-footed, so make sure you rounding the materials you are using.

Use the chart below to ballpark your roost bar length.



Next, we will cover another essential component inside your coop!

# Nesting Boxes

Nesting boxes are where your chickens will lay their eggs. Even if you are raising your chickens for meat, you will need a nesting box.

Creating a safe and comfortable space for chickens to lay their eggs is key. Use the checklist below to make sure you are meeting your ladies' needs.

## Nesting Box Checklist



- 

Pine shavings or straw bedding
- 

1 box for every 4 hens
- 

Dark & quiet location
- 

Easy egg collection
- 

Accessible for cleaning
- 

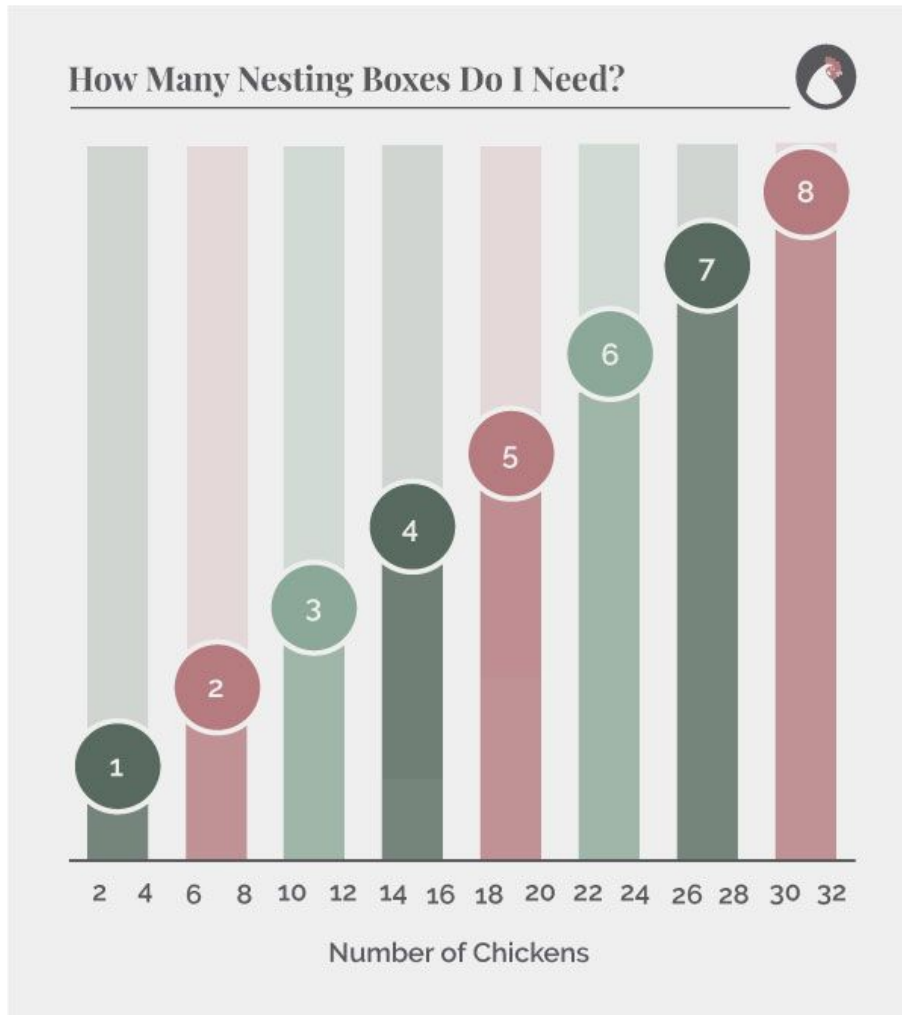
1'-3' off ground
- 

12" tall, wide, and deep
- 

Slanted roof to prevent roosting
- 

3" lip on bottom rim

Despite what you might think, each hen does not need her own nesting box. You should have at least 1 nesting box for every 4 laying hens.



Collect the eggs daily and keep the boxes clean. Establishing a regular routine that works for your schedule is a surefire way to maintain a happy and healthy coop.

The top of the nesting box pictured below has poop all over it...dang it. This is due to the flat roof.

Don't be like the picture below. Make sure your nesting boxes have slanted roofs!



Bedding is also required in a nesting box and the coop itself.

The next section talks about different types.

## Chicken Coop Bedding

No, we aren't talking about Pottery Barn sheets. Bedding is like litter. Your coop will need bedding to absorb moisture, insulate the coop, and cushion your flock.

You'll notice there are a lot of different bedding options out there. If you want to hit the easy button, just get pine shavings or straw.

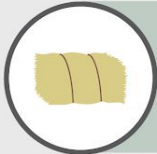





If you are curious about all the options, check out the chart below.



# Chicken Coop Bedding

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MATERIAL	PROS	CONS	MOISTURE CONTROL	RATING
 Straw	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compostable</li> <li>• Warm, comfy environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard to clean</li> <li>• Can be expensive</li> </ul>	Good	
 Pine Shavings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doesn't break down quickly</li> <li>• Easy to clean</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can cause respiratory issues</li> </ul>	Good	
 Sand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy to clean</li> <li>• Natural dust bath</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can impede drainage</li> </ul>	Good	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good for nesting boxes only</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gets smelly &amp; dirty quickly</li> </ul>	Poor	
Hay				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good alternative if well dried</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cannot use if lawn has been sprayed</li> </ul>	Poor	
Grass Clippings				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dries quickly</li> <li>• Free during fall season</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Packs down too tightly</li> </ul>	Fair	
Dried Leaves				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inexpensive</li> <li>• Good bacteria growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Toxic ink</li> <li>• Frequent replacement</li> </ul>	Excellent	
Shredded Paper				

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## Chicken Feeders

There are tons of different types of feeders. You will want to set your flock up with a good feeder that has these qualities.



In the photo below on the left is a basic plastic feeder that can be hung up to reduce the quantity of feed chickens will waste. On the right is an example of a homemade, automatic feeder.



# Chicken Waterers

Also known as a drinker, a waterer is pretty self-explanatory. It's a glorified water dish for your flock.

Below are a few things to look for when making or buying a waterer.



Automatic waterers are great because your chickens will never run out of water, however, that entails a lot of upfront work and potential upkeep issues. You have to run a water line out and make sure it doesn't freeze or clog.

For a small backyard flock, you probably don't need an automatic waterer. There are tons of hand-filled and hand-carried waterers available.

Below are a few common waterer examples.



You can either make your own waterer or hit the easy button and buy one. Don't forget to read the reviews on products to help you make the best decision. Remember, you get what you pay for!



# Permanent Chicken Coops

When choosing a chicken coop, you will need to decide if you want a permanent coop or a portable coop.

Permanent coops offer a lot of opportunities to build pretty landscaping around the coop, similar to a shed.



Permanent coops and portable coops both have many advantages and disadvantages.



	Permanent	Portable
Predator protection	✓	
Suitable for smaller yards	✓	✓
Moveable		✓
Winter-friendly	✓	✓
Suitable for larger flocks	✓	
Mite and Parasite-free		✓
Fresh foraging areas		✓
Storage space for feed	✓	

Basically, if you have a larger flock and or a smaller yard, you are probably going to want to have a permanent coop.

## Portable Chicken Coops

Portable coops, aka tractor coops, are meant to be moved around the yard.

This gives your flock new, fresh foraging opportunities and prevents your yard from being completely destroyed.



Below are the components you'll want when building or buying a portable coop.



## Portable Chicken Coop Checklist



At least 4 sq ft per hen



Wheels attached for moving



Accessible for collecting eggs



Secure entry points



Hardware cloth for protection



Adequate ventilation



Access to shade in run



Not too light, but not too heavy



Durable from elements

With portable coops, you have to move them to a new spot every day or so to keep the whole operation running smoothly. Unless you are The Hulk or Mr. Incredible, you will need to make sure you use lightweight materials so you can move it with ease.


The lightweight materials make it easier for predators to bust in, so finding the right balance is key.

# DIY Chicken Coop vs Chicken Coop Kits

Now that you know all the considerations that go into a chicken coop, it will be easier to decide if you want to buy or build your coop.

If you have carpentry skills, time, and access to recycled materials, you are a perfect candidate to build your own chicken coop.

If not, you may want to consider buying one. Just remember you will still have to assemble it.



	DIY	Buy
Customizable	✓	
Time-saving		✓
Guarenteed quality	✓	
Generally easier		✓
Carpentry skills needed	✓	
Control over material	✓	
Beginner-friendly		✓

If you would like to search for DIY coop plans, go to [www.milefour.com/blogs/chicken-coop](http://www.milefour.com/blogs/chicken-coop) to search from hundreds of plans.

Thanks for reading The Ultimate Chicken Coop Guide. We hope you enjoyed it!