Coop Basics

SMALL FLOCKS COLLABORATIVE

Before you build, think about how many birds you plan to keep, not just now, but as your flock grows. A smart setup makes care easier and keeps birds healthier. Small details make a big difference in protecting your flock and ensuring a healthy, comfortable environment for your and your birds. **A good coop keeps birds safe, dry, and healthy year-round.**

Quick Tips

Pick a high ground, dry spot to limit flooding, improve drainage, and keep rodents away

Use locking latches and secure wire to keep predators and pests out

Paint coop surfaces and use solid, non-porous flooring (i.e. vinyl or sealed wood) to allow for easy cleaning

Add vents or windows to promote airflow and reduce moisture and ammonia buildup

Use shade, insulation, and south-facing windows or runs to help birds handle heat and cold

Build a predator-safe run with a roof or cover, buried fencing, and strong sides to keep birds safe while outside

Key Characteristics

Coop and Run Size

- **Chickens**: Coop: 2-4 sq ft, Run: 8-10 sq ft (Bantams can be slightly smaller)
- **Turkeys**: Coop: 6-10 sq ft, Run: 15+ sq ft
- **Ducks**: Coop: 4-6 sq ft, Run: 10-15 sq ft run

Lighting

- Hens need 14-16 hours of light per day to keep laying
- Use a 40W bulb in winter if needed

Ventilation

- Provide 1 sq ft of vent per 10 sq ft of coop
- Cover all vents with half-inch hardware cloth

Predator Protection

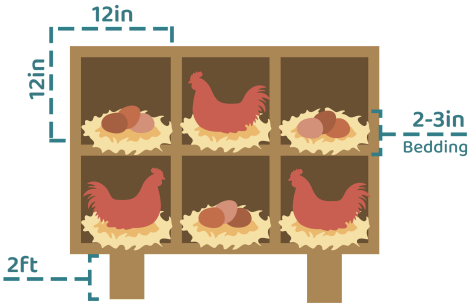
- Lock up coops before dark
- Use half-inch hardware cloth (**not chicken wire**)
- Bury fencing 8-12 inches to stop diggers
- Cover runs to protect from other birds like hawks and owls

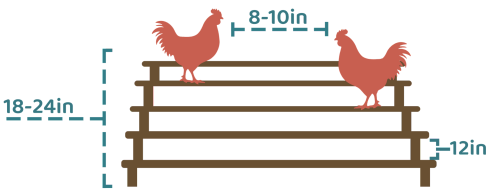
Feed and Water

- Birds need access to water **at all times**
- Allow 3 inches of feeder and 1 inch of waterer space for each bird (i.e. if there are 3 birds - 9 inches of feeder space and 3 inches of waterer space)
- Use multiple stations to prevent crowding

Nesting Boxes

- One 12 inch x 12 inch box for every 4-5 hens
- Place 2 ft off the ground and 4 ft from the roosts
- Add 2-3 inches of clean bedding
- External boxes with a locking hatch make egg collection easier



Roosting Perches

- 8–10 inches per chicken, 4–8 inches for bantams
- Space bars 12 inches apart and 18–24 inches off the ground
- Keep perches under 4 ft high
- Use rounded or smooth 2x4s
- Skip perches or keep them low for heavy meat breeds