Dropping Pits

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Dropping Pits

Advantages
Labor Saver
Sanitary
Cleaner Eggs
Drier Litter
Cheaper To Build

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Dropping pits or "roosting racks" have become popular with the poultry raisers wherever they have been used. Many folks have replaced their roosts with dropping pits. People with old barns, hog houses or other buildings that have been remodeled into a poultry laying house have asked for information on constructing dropping pits.

Folks who have used the pit type roost cite the following advantages:

1. **Labor saving** . . . Pits do not need to be cleaned as often as dropping boards. Some clean them once a month, others every three or four months, and some only once a year. It is not recommended to let the droppings accumulate for more than six months. For the average flock, removal of the droppings three times a year—spring, summer and fall—is highly satisfactory. This provides sanitary conditions with a small amount of labor.

2. **Aids sanitation** . . . No other piece of equipment can go into a poultry house that will help more to make the house sanitary than a dropping pit. A large part of the poultry droppings are deposited in the pit; therefore, the litter will remain cleaner much longer. Pits also help to control and prevent spread of many of our poultry diseases and parasites. The use of dropping pits helps to keep the litter and floor dry so there will be less chance for the disease agents to develop and multiply.

3. **Keeps the eggs cleaner** . . . Because there is less droppings in the litter and the hens are not allowed to walk and scratch in the droppings, there is much less chance for eggs to be made dirty. Dirty eggs are caused by hens walking or scratching in dirty litter and then going into the nests.

4. **Helps to keep the litter dry** . . . When the droppings accumulate in the pit, less moisture is added to the litter.

5. **Provides a good place for hens to rest** . . . A heavy producing hen does not eat and scratch all the time. Hens will spend considerable time during the day resting on the roosts after eating. It does not decrease floor space. The birds will make more use of the space on top of the roosts than they do the floor space under the dropping boards.

6. **May save some eggs** . . . With the use of one by four inch welded mesh wire or one

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*Extension Poultryman*  

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Scatter superphosphate over dropping pits at the rate of five pounds per 100 birds each week. This helps to keep down ammonia odors by "tying up" the nitrogen in the droppings, and increases the value of manure.
Here's How They Work
A. If the roosts are built in six or eight-foot sections, they are easiest to build and easier to handle for cleaning.

B. When the pits run the full length of the house, they should be wide enough to accommodate four perches in houses which are less than 20 feet wide. There should be five perches in houses 20 to 24 feet wide and six perches in houses 24 to 30 feet wide. The width of the pits may need to be increased if the pit does not run the full length of the house.

C. One by two or one by four inch welded wire should be laid flat and stapled over the frame and under the roosting poles.

D. Perch poles are placed above the wire on the frames. If there is a tendency for the 2x2's to crack, a hole may be drilled before the nail is driven through.

E. A half-inch pipe or a six-inch lag screw may be used to support the back of the roost frame. This makes it easy to remove the roosts for cleaning.

F. The frame should be constructed of 2x4's. Some prefer to use a 1x4 for the front edge to reduce accumulation of droppings.

G. Boards or wire netting are used on the front of the pit. The boards may be spaced two inches apart if desired.

or super phosphate and sprinkle over the droppings once a week or every 10 days. A few pounds sprinkled over the droppings will not only keep the odors down but will make the manure more valuable. The phosphate will “hook up” with the ammonia thereby saving it from escaping. No one has proved that the odor effects the production of the hens. These odors may be a sign to the operator that more ventilation is needed in the house.

2. Breed flies ... Sometimes flies will breed in the pit in warm summer months. To prevent this, sprinkle powdered (crude) borax over the pit.
**Construction**

There is no set way or one plan for building a dropping pit. The poultry raiser must build his according to the size (width and length) of his laying house and the number of laying hens housed.

The following basic principles may be followed:

1. The pit and roosts may be constructed 18 inches to 24 inches from the floor.

2. Eight inches of roost space per bird should be provided for light breeds such as Leghorns and 10 inches per bird for heavy breeds such as Plymouth Rocks or New Hampshires.

3. The perch poles should be from 12 inches to 14 inches apart (center to center).

4. The roosting frame should be supported at the back by:
   (a) Two short half-inch pipes placed in a half-inch hole bored in the 2 by 4 studding of the wall (see cut on page 6) or:
   (b) Heavy "T" or strap hinges (the hinges will rust out in time) or:
   (c) Leather straps used like a hinge (will not rust, but difficult to remove roosts).

5. The roosting frame should be made of 2 by 4's on all four sides.

6. **Welded wire**, one by two or one by four inch should be placed tightly over the frame (do not use light weight chicken netting wire).

7. Two by two or two by three inch perches should be nailed or set between nails on top of the frame and wire. They may be run either lengthwise or crosswise.

8. Boards or wire netting can be used on the sides to prevent birds from getting under the roosts. We prefer boards.

9. A substantial support should be provided to hold up the front end of the roosting rack (see cuts at left).
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