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Constructing a colony cage for layers

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G. Geiger, W. Russell and H. Enos^{1/}

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A small colony cage makes an excellent shelter for a small flock of laying hens. It can be placed in one of the outbuildings around a farmstead to house chickens. Building a colony cage makes an ideal project for a youngster.

The following instructions are given for constructing a colony cage. All instructions should be read completely before beginning.

- The frame should be constructed as shown in Figure 1, using 2 x 4-inch lumber. Floor supports A and B are sloped to allow eggs to "roll away" after being laid.

- The wire for the floor is cut as shown in Figure 2.

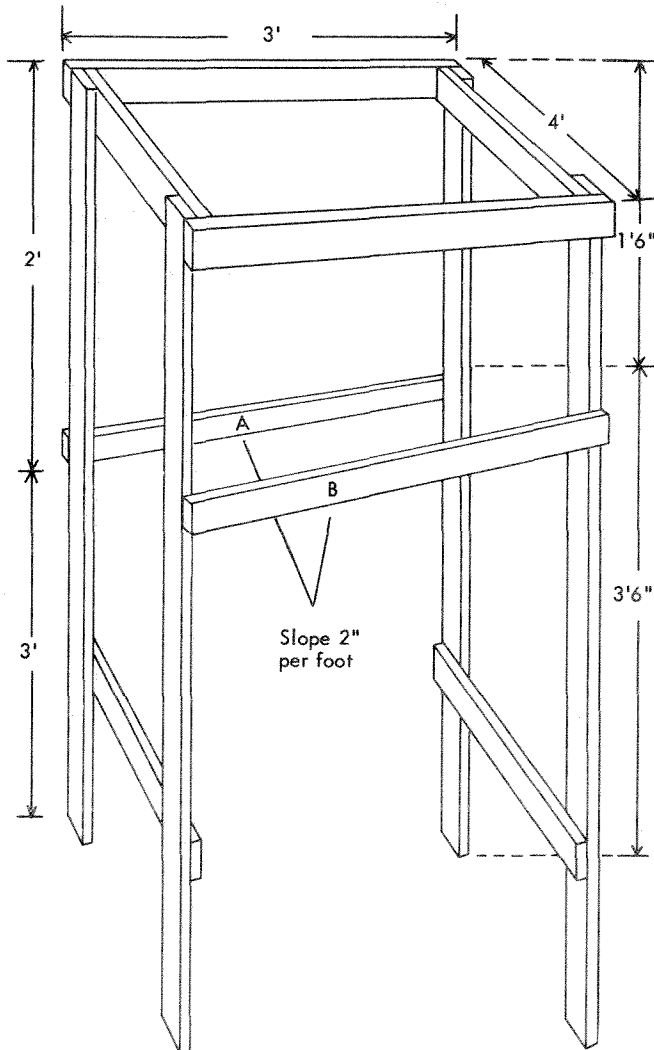


Figure 1: Framing assembly.

- Stretch 1 x 2-inch welded wire tightly across A and B. The wire floor will have to hold 75 to 100 pounds (34 to 45 kilograms) or more, so it must be secured tightly to prevent sagging.

This can be done by fastening the wire securely with a staple at each strand on one side. Using hammer claws or an iron rake on the opposite end to create tension, fasten with staples, starting in the center and working toward the back and front of the cage. Tabs (T in Figure 2) are folded up and stapled to corner posts to help support floor.

- The wire on the sides and top is 2 x 4-inch welded wire. Cut pieces for the side and top and fasten them securely to the frame with staples. Place wire on the sides of the frame with the two-inch spacing running horizontally.

- Cut a 10 x 12-inch opening in one side and use the cutout for a door. Fashion a hinge and hook out of wire.

- Leave a 2½-inch space between the bottom of the floor in the front and the bottom edge of the front wire so that the eggs will roll out into the collection tray (see Figure 3).

- Waterers and feeders can be made of rain guttering (see Figure 3) and attached to the front of the cage or at any convenient spot. Be sure the birds have easy access to the feed and water. It may be necessary to cut the wire above the troughs to provide vertical slots two inches wide and six to eight inches long.

The feeder and waterer should run the length of the cage to provide adequate space. Additional feed and water space can be provided on an opposite side of the cage.

^{1/}G. Geiger and W. Russell, department of poultry husbandry, College of Agriculture, University of Missouri; submitted by Howard Enos, CSU extension associate professor, poultry science; originally published as USDA fact sheet AFS3-6-2 (7/1/78)

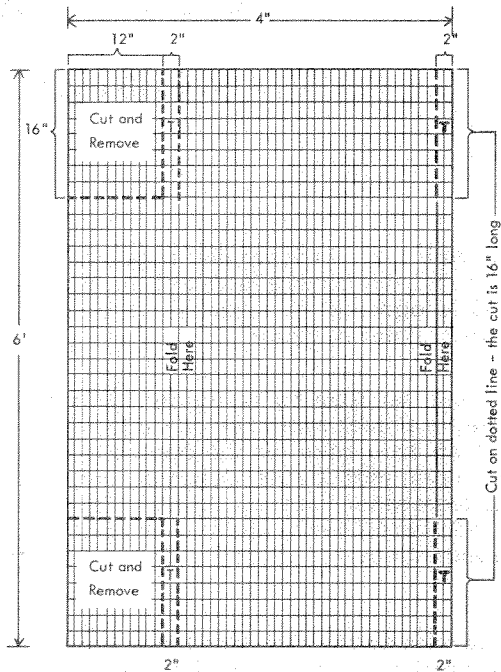


Figure 2: Cutting the floor for a colony cage. Take a piece of 1" x 2" welded wire 4' x 6' long. Cut as shown on dotted lines. Then fold wire upward at 90° angles lengthwise along the line of the inner cuts as indicated. Slide wire into position on A and B (see Figure 1), leaving an overlap of about 1 foot on each end. The floor now may be secured in place. Fasten tabs (T) to corner posts and fashion egg collection tray.

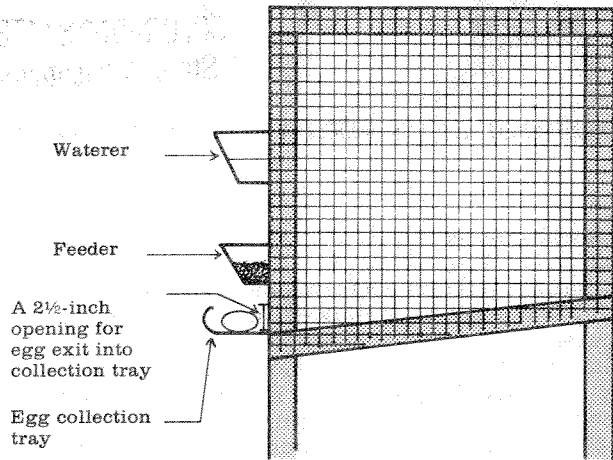


Figure 3: Side view of colony cage with feeder, waterer and collection tray in place.

*To convert to metrics, use the following conversions:
 1 inch = 2.54 centimeters; 1 foot = 30 centimeters or .3 meters.*