

Getting hens to lay in a nest box

Nest eggs encourage hens to lay in the correct area



The nesting area must be...

- A place where the hens want to lay their eggs.
- Accessible to egg collectors.
- Easy to clean.

Otherwise hens will lay them on the floor, where the eggs are likely to be soiled, cracked and hard to reach.

Occasionally, hens hide their eggs and nests. Finding eggs a week or two after they have been laid can be a less than pleasant experience.

When to use nest eggs?

- To persuade hens to lay eggs in a nesting box (and not elsewhere).
- To discourage egg eating by hens, a bad habit that can spread rapidly and is hard to stop.

Nest Box FAQs

Q. What if the hens don't lay in the nesting box?

A. Consider these changes:

- Try placing a ceramic or wooden nest egg in the box (*below*).
- Place a comfortable amount of clean bedding in the nesting box. Remove after they consistently lay in the box.
- Locate nests in darker, secluded areas. Hens prefer to nest where they feel less visible to predators.



Nest Eggs

Discourage egg eating and teach hens where to lay their eggs.

Mark the ceramic eggs in order to tell them apart from the real eggs in the nest. (We've made this mistake!)

Wooden

Chicken Egg, 0.20 lb#530137

Ceramic

Chicken Egg, brown, 0.10 lb#530136

Chicken Egg, white, 0.10 lb#530138

Quail Egg, white, 0.03 lb#530148

Goose Egg, white, 0.15 lb#530147

Q. Where and how high should I set up the nest boxes?

A. Place in corners or dimly lit areas of the coop, but make sure both you and your birds have easy access to the nest. 2 ft high at the base of the nest is reachable for most birds. Egg-stealing pests also have a harder time reaching this height.

Q. What material should I use?

A. We've sold or used plastic, metal and wooden boxes over the years, with hundreds of chickens. Plastic is preferred because it doesn't rot, is easy to clean, and lacks seams that mites or lice can hide in.

Hybrid metal/plastic units are a close second. Metal is durable and plastic is quick to clean.

Q. Should I use bedding?

A. With a roll-out tray, you may have to initially use bedding. After the hens get in the habit of laying in the box (with a tray), gradually remove the bedding.

If not using the roll-out tray, we prefer straw or hay—both stay in the box better than wood shavings.

Q. Why do my hens roost in the box?

A. Hens, like humans, prefer a dark, secluded area to rest their eyes. Nesting boxes provide the ideal environment to "get away from it all." The result is filth-covered or broken eggs, and a dirty nest box.

Most of our designs feature a roost that's easy to open/close. Lower the roost in the morning so the hens may lay, and raise it at night to stop hens from taking over the nest boxes.

Q. How do I clean nest boxes?

A. We remove and powerwash our nest boxes when needed. Some disinfect with a detergent. To clean plastic nesting pads, soak for several hours and then spray with a hose and nozzle. These can be cleaned with a detergent as well.

Q. Do colony nests work?

A. We have recently started to use colony nest boxes and found that they do indeed work. They are large enough to allow hens their individual spaces. Like standard nest boxes, colony nests should be located in a dark, secluded area so hens are comfortable enough to lay in them.