

Getting hens to lay in a nest box



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 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.

(left) Placing a nest egg (below) to encourage the hens to lay in the correct area. Shown here is a ChickBox.

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 right*).
 - 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.

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, combining metal's durability and plastic's quick cleaning.

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.



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](#) #530137

Ceramic

[Chicken Egg, brown](#) #530136

[Chicken Egg, white](#) #530138

[Quail Egg, white](#) #530148

[Goose Egg, white](#) #530147