

## ROOSTING CUBES

After buying many custom-built chicken 'tractors' (*mobile pens*) for 40 years, I finally made one myself that is **DURABLE & EASIER TO MOVE** every day—often with one hand. My garden areas get fertilized and there isn't a yucky smelling coop to clean out. Every now & then, it just needs the fencing rinsed on the sides where stuff splatters (*they never seem to roost in the middle*). Here's how to make one:

**5 chain link fence GATES** (*Lowe's*) formed into a CUBE & **fencing hardware** (*to connect them*) opening on one side. Here are my 2 Cubes. The one on the left has 2 wheels. But, the one without wheels is actually **EASIER** to move.



**4-8 BRANCHES** arranged inside for comfy perching will hold about 10 birds—if they get along. They prefer being up high—but not touching the top. Move branches regularly.

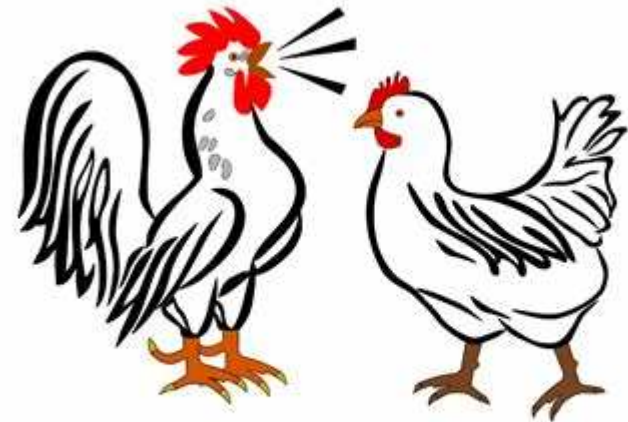
**1 TARP** on top (*for inclement weather*)

For a **custom fit** (*instead of a square tarp*), AlcoCovers.com (*in FL*) makes custom INDUSTRIAL COVERS (*12oz & 18oz*) for about \$100 with tie downs (*I prefer the elasticized tie down*). The best cover I got was 16" x 46" x 46." (*It measured 48"—but that was too loose*). They come in different colors (*dark colors absorb heat & keep the hens warm at night, light colors reflect heat and keep them cool—but they're reversible for seasonal changing*).

Also, I now put a 3 foot kiddie POOL upside down in the tarp (*with a few light-weight big balls inside to keep the tarp & pool from sagging in heavy rain or snow*).

## Chickens 101

*by grandma ginger  
(started out as a 'city girl' but have been raising chickens for eggs over 40 years now)*





### Eating & Drinking:

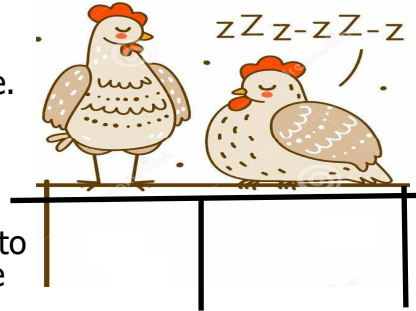
Chickens prefer to eat bugs: fleas, termites, worms, ticks... and, fruit or grain with small seeds. Therefore, the **more** land a chicken has to forage, the better. Food scraps are good—but not all (i.e., **any part of the avocado is deadly poisonous** to chickens). Clean drinking water



is essential & adding a little apple cider vinegar helps to keep chickens healthy. If you buy feed, get only ORGANIC feeds.

### Sleeping:

Chickens instinctively go to sleep at sundown and get up at sunrise. They prefer to perch on wood branches—which is good, since **they poop all night**.



On the next page, I explain how to make a ROOSTING CUBE for safe & sanitary roosting at night.

### Protection from Predators:

Chicken hawks are wary of noisy **dogs, owls & snakes** (get artificial ones) & **scarecrows**. Nocturnal predators (*opossums, skunks, foxes, coyotes, raccoons*) can usually be kept at bay by a good dog (*incidentally, most adult dogs & cats won't mess with a mother hen & her chicks*). Hardware cloth (*rabbit wire*) or chicken wire run around the bottom of the night-time ROOSTING CUBE makes it more secure.

### Laying Eggs:

In the morning, when the hens are let out of the CUBE, they need a cozy, sheltered place to lay eggs. That's what those cute expensive chicken coops are good for! (*Or, get a box.*) **With or without the help of a rooster**, an adult (*about 5-6 months old*) chicken will begin **laying an egg a day**. When it's **very** hot or **very** cold, she'll **quit** for awhile. That's normal. Some breeds, like silkies, only lay about 80 eggs a year anyway. Leghorns lay nearly 300 eggs a year! Different breeds lay different color eggs. Nutritional value and taste is determined by **what the chicken eats**, not the egg color!



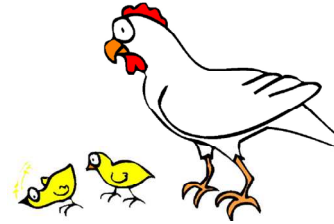
### Brooding:

When a chicken refuses to get off the eggs, that means she wants to hatch them. If she's been around a rooster, they're probably fertile **but will only develop IF** kept warm for 21 days. She'll get up for bathroom and food breaks a few times a day and it won't hurt the developing eggs—unless she gets disoriented and doesn't come back. Other chickens will keep adding to her egg nest (*even getting in with her to do so*) and may even 'babysit' the eggs. Isolating her to keep the pile down to a manageable number of eggs should be done at night—or she may get off them and try to go back to where the original nest was, or refuse to continue.



### Hatching:

The chicks won't all hatch at the same time. It'll take several days and the baby chicks don't need to eat or drink the first day or so (*which is why they are shipped at birth*). A small waterer with a few drops of apple cider vinegar and a dish with brewer's yeast & organic corn meal make for good starter food. After that, the mother will immediately teach them to dig for bugs and you can supplement with chick feed if you don't think they're getting enough bugs. I prefer organic feeds—since when genetically modified corn & soy were first introduced, **NONE** of my hens reproduced anymore until I started using **only** organic feed.



A **mother hen** will sit on her chicks at night until they have feathers. Provide a coop with soft straw for awhile. At some point, she'll abandon the chicks and **go back to perching** with the other hens. By then, the chicks may perch. I let little chicks free-range in my garden to eat all bugs! Mothers dig too vigorously and expose the roots or eat leaves.

### Bathing:

Provide a shallow hole in the ground (*sheltered from rain*) with ashes & sand for them to 'bathe' in. Mix in a little food grade diatomaceous earth (*ground-up diatom shells*)—it's safe and nutritious for animals & people but is like fiberglass to soft-bodied insects—mites, ticks & fleas.