



THE RANGE REARING OF CHICKS

A good green range is essential for the successful rearing of strong vigorous stock. To give poultry a definite place in the regular farm rotation is an assurance against parasitic infection. By this method the chickens need never be on the same ground for two successive years, thus breaking the cycle of infection with the result that the flock may be entirely freed of most of the parasites that so frequently play havoc with flocks on intensive plants.

The methods of rearing followed on the Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa, are simple, labour saving and consequently inexpensive. The chicks are taken directly from the incubator to colony houses on the range where they are brooded. As soon as they become accustomed to the house, when weather permits, they are allowed onto the ground, being confined to small yards. When the chicks get used to the new surroundings and the vegetation becomes sparse, the yards are enlarged until the birds are finally allowed free range.

When it becomes necessary to separate the chicks to allow for more house room the cockerels are taken out, those culled are sent to the batteries or fattening pens and those to be retained for breeders or for growing to roasting age are put in range roosting coops. The pullets are allowed to remain in the colony houses which have the windows removed to allow fresh air conditions.

The age at which this separation is made depends largely on the time of year and the condition and growth of the chicks. They should be off artificial heat for a week or two, should be well feathered and roosting before attempting to put them in range shelters. Early in the season it is advisable to cover the sides and north end of the roosting coop with sacking or burlap until the chickens become used to free air conditions.

Later if it is found that the colony houses are becoming crowded some of the pullets are also removed to range shelters.

A Range Shelter

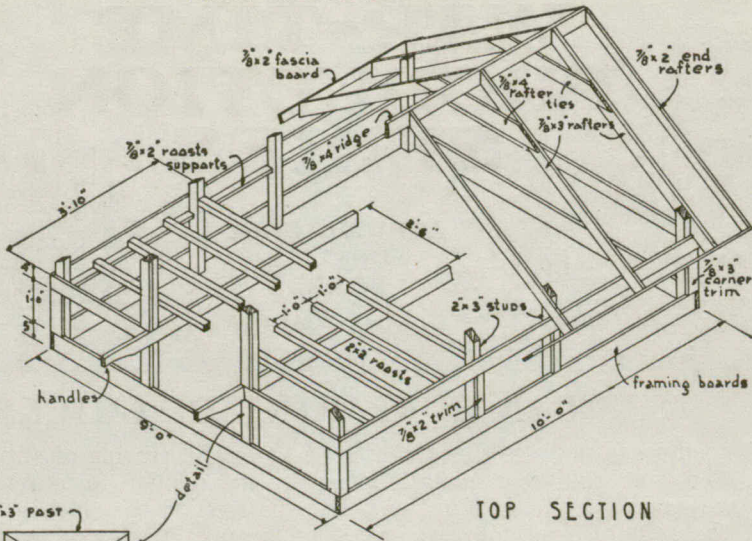
Range shelters have come into such common use that they are now regarded by progressive poultry-keepers as being a necessity and users are invariably enthusiastic as to their convenience and value in successful poultry culture. Not only do they provide ideal roosting quarters for growing breeding cockerels and developing pullets but they may also be used to advantage for pen fattening market stock or housing yearling layers that have just completed their pullet year production and are being conditioned for the following seasons breeding. There are a great many different types of shelters in use. The one shown herewith has been selected because it fills all the requirements for an efficient shelter and will meet the requirements of the majority of poultry-keepers.

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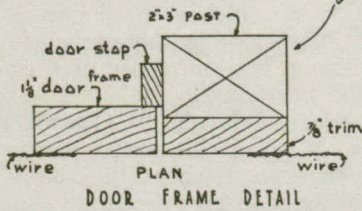
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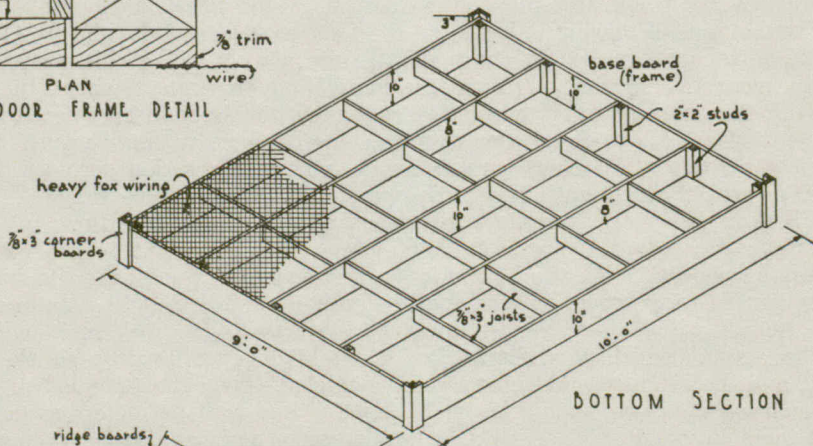
PLAN—RANGE SHELTER



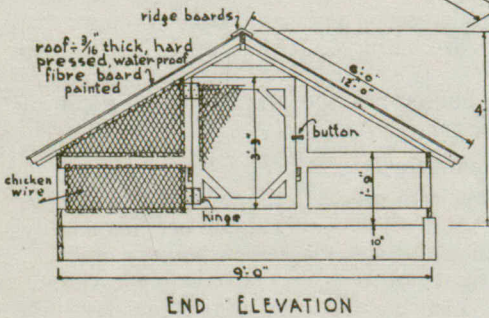
TOP SECTION



DOOR FRAME DETAIL



BOTTOM SECTION



END ELEVATION



Bill of materials used in construction of Range Shelter shown opposite:—

<i>Description</i>	<i>No. Pieces</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>
<i>Bottom Section</i>		
Base boards.....	5	$\frac{7}{8}$ " x 10" x 10'
Floor joists.....	2	$\frac{7}{8}$ " x 8" x 10'
Floor joists.....	4	$\frac{7}{8}$ " x 3" x 9'
Cleats, in corners at ends of joists.....	1	2" x 2" x 7'
<i>Top Section</i>		
Corner posts and studs.....	2	2" x 3" x 9'
Door framing.....	2	2" x 3" x 10'
Framing boards.....	2	$\frac{7}{8}$ " x 4" x 8'
Framing boards.....	2	$\frac{7}{8}$ " x 4" x 10'
Framing boards.....	4	$\frac{7}{8}$ " x 5" x 10'
Rafters	6	$\frac{7}{8}$ " x 3" x 12'
End rafters.....	2	$\frac{7}{8}$ " x 2" x 12'
Ridge piece.....	1	$\frac{7}{8}$ " x 4" x 12'
Rafter ties.....	3	$\frac{7}{8}$ " x 4" x 8'
Fascia board.....	2	$\frac{7}{8}$ " x 2" x 12'
Roosts supports (handles).....	2	1 $\frac{1}{8}$ " x 4" x 14'
Roosts.....	9	2" x 2" x 8'
Roosts supports (sides).....	2	$\frac{7}{8}$ " x 2" x 12'
Ridge boards.....	2	$\frac{7}{8}$ " x 3" x 12'
Door trim, corner trim, etc.....	2	$\frac{7}{8}$ " x 3" x 10'
Doors (2).....	2	1 $\frac{1}{8}$ " x 3" x 12'
Roof covering—2 sheets, $\frac{3}{16}$ " x 6' x 6' x 12' hard-pressed waterproof fibre board painted.		
Wire floor—9' x 10' = 90 sq. ft.		
2" mesh electric-weld, heavy fox wire.		
Chicken wire 1" mesh around outside and ends 22 lin. ft. 36" wide.		
Hinges 2 pr. staples, nails (use galv. nails for roof), hooks and eyes (4) to hold two sections together.		

Ranges

The place of chickens in the rotation is the hay year or the year following hay after which the sod is ploughed for corn or roots. At the sides of the field and every so often in the width, a strip is ploughed and seeded to corn or sunflower. These strips not only provide variety from the alfalfa, clovers and grasses of the meadow but also provide shade and cover for the young stock. Remember it is the tender new growth that is most appetizing and that makes the most nutritious pastures. Whenever the growth becomes too rank the mower should be run over the range to keep the greenfeed tender. Where land is limited or the poultry operation is such as to warrant the increased cost of cultivation, a series of crops arranged in strips may be sown throughout the growing season. In this system of cultivation the objective is a supply of greenfeed, not grain, consequently seeding should be heavy, about twice the amount usually sown where a crop of grain is the aim. This system is followed at the Ontario Agricultural College and the following plan is offered by Dr. F. N. Marcellus.*

* Pastures for Poultry, Extension Circular No. 54, Ontario Department of Agriculture, Toronto, Ont.

Grass.	
Spring-seeded the previous year.	
Fall-seeded fall rye.	} Ploughed and reseeded to late oats as soon as eaten off.
Spring-seeded early oats.	
Spring-seeded early oats.	} Ploughed and reseeded to late corn and rape end of May.
Spring-seeded late oats.	
Oats seeded down with grass seed.	

The layout may be altered or rearranged to suit local requirements.

Tillage is a very important part of the pasture program, and as soon as a piece of ground gets bare of vegetation it should be cultivated and reseeded with a crop suitable for the period.

Feeding

Feeding arrangements are the simplest possible. By the time the chicks are on free range they will be on growing rations. Hoppers of good growing mash and range scratch grains are supplied where the stock may eat at will. Never feed musty grain or allow the birds access to musty feed of any kind. Clean water should always be available and a supply of grit where necessary.

With early hatched chicks or where they are developing too quickly it may be advisable to close the hoppers during most of the day. This will result in greater ranging and a heavier consumption of greenfeed thus assuring a more adequate supply of vitamins and minerals.

Management

The chickens should be well feathered and roosting before being moved to the range shelters. See that they take to the roosts and do not pile up in the corners as they are liable to do if not warm enough. Keep them closed in the shelters for a day or two until the birds become used to them so that they will return to them of their own accord. Place the shelters far enough apart so that each group remains a separate colony. Be sure to allow plenty of hoppers and hopper space and free access to the water fountains. Clean the colony houses frequently and move them often to keep them on fresh ground. Above all see that the hoppers and drinking fountains are never allowed to remain in one place long enough to produce slum conditions. Move them at least once a week.

Watch for lice and mites. If these are found a mixture of crank-case oil and nicotine sulphate painted on the bottom of roosts and in the cracks will keep them under control.

Bulletins on poultry keeping and plans for Colony Houses and Range Shelters may be obtained by writing the Publicity and Extension Division, Department of Agriculture, Ottawa.