

Poultry Houses - Their Layout, Location and Operation

Purchasing or building a poultry house is the first operation in successful poultry keeping. The design, location and operation of your poultry yard will greatly influence health, and therefore the production from your enterprise.

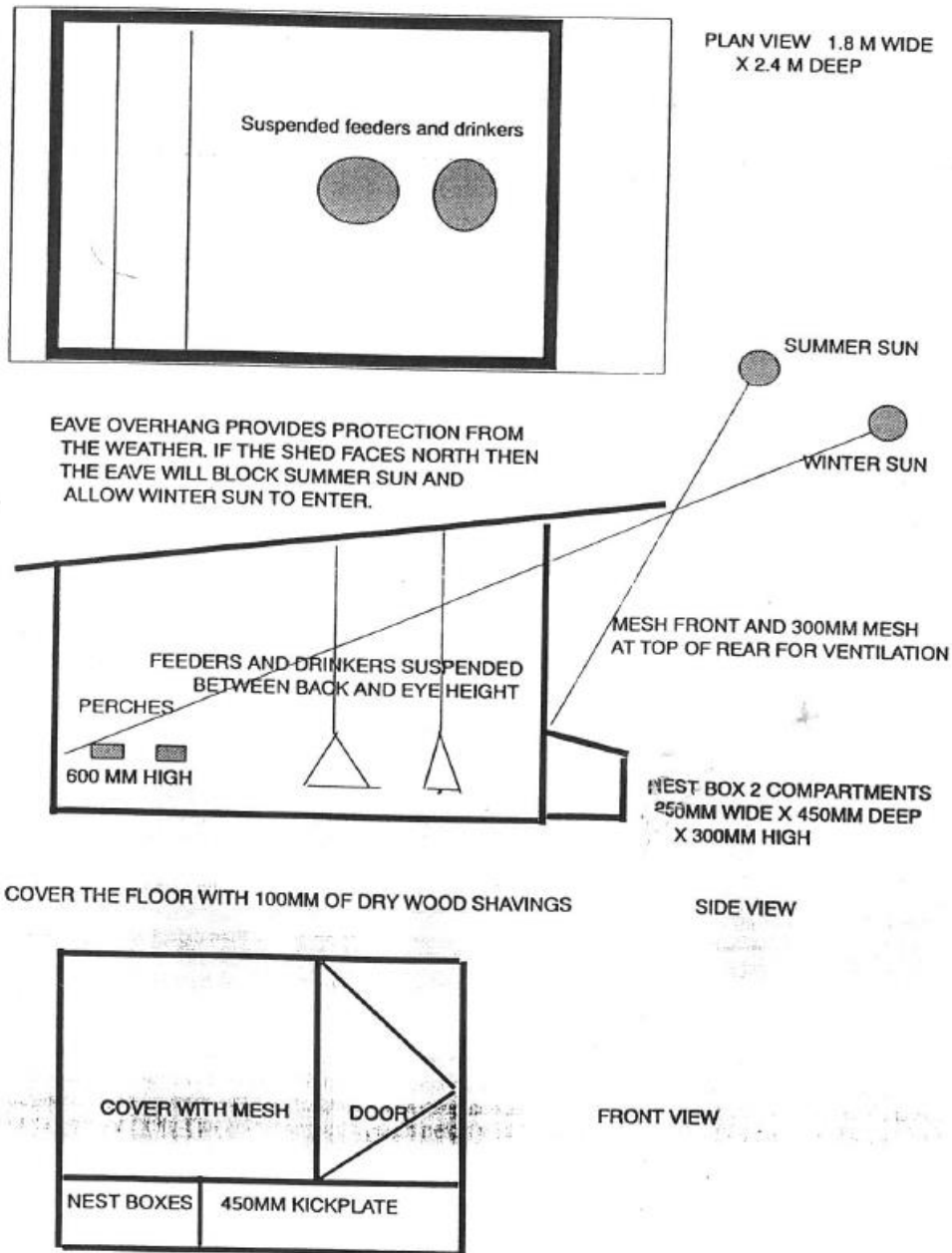
Firstly, check with your local council to ensure that your operation will conform to local by-laws. This may influence the type of poultry house you buy or build. Usual regulations deal with distances from boundaries, distance from dwellings, vermin proofing and the amount of area used.

Secondly look for the alternative sites that the house may be located on. The ideal site has several features:

1. Northern aspect. This means that the shed should preferably face the north. With good shed design this will mean that the summer sun has no access to the inside of the shed but the winter sun has full access, so the inside of the shed is cooler in summer and warmer in winter. The litter will also stay drier in the winter. Other directions may be necessary if prevailing weather patterns produce high winds from the north especially when those winds carry a lot of rain. Many older books recommend east facing sheds but these may need shade or blinds in summer.
2. Afternoon shade in the summer. This usually means trees on the west to south western side of the shed (Victorian locations). Some eastern shade may also be desirable. If possible a windbreak on the side of the winter cold winds is helpful also. Shed design in most of Australia is more concerned with the worst case conditions in summer rather than the winter. If the shed temperature is less than ideal in winter, then the birds will usually just eat more and produce less, assuming that the birds are not exposed to high winds.
3. Well drained soils in the runs. This is important as wet soggy runs have bad long term effects on the birds. If the roof water is not collected by gutter, make sure that the water is diverted away from the run area.
4. The runs should be as large as possible. I recommend a minimum run size of 36 sq. metres (400 sq. ft) of run space per bird if the birds are to have continuous access to the run. Even with this area, the run can be a little ragged. If less space is available then limit the time the birds have access to the run.

The best type of shed operation for the small hobbyist is a deep litter house. This is where the shed floor is covered with thick layer of absorbent material such as wood shavings. These are usually available cheaply and if not overstocked require changing only every six months to yearly. The shavings develop a beneficial bacterial action with the droppings, resulting in the locking up of the ammonia from the droppings into the shavings. This means that the litter has almost no smell as long as it stays dry. Rice hulls and shredded newspaper are two other alternatives to the shavings, but we have found that straw and hay are not as good as they are not as absorbent and so tend to smell more.

POULTRY HOUSE PLANS FOR 12 FOWLS



If odour is a problem because litter is difficult to obtain, or when keeping ducks, then digestive enzymes may assist with odour reduction. This deep litter shed is usually sufficient size to keep the birds in all the time and the run is then able to be rested if so required. The birds can also be left locked in during absences from them. The poultry house should allow about 1.5 sq metres (4 sq ft) of space per bird.

When designing a shed remember that open space is more important than closed area in the majority of Australia's climates. Open area can be closed in winter by doors and flaps, but if the shed is designed without adequate ventilation, it is difficult to add it later. Sheds deeper than about 1.2 metres (4 feet) require rear ventilation as well as an open front. Eave overhangs should allow adequate weather protection as well as summer shade and winter sun access.

The shed fittings should include clean continuous water supply, food supply hopper, and nesting facilities. Perches can be added as required.

Bellsouth
POULTRY EQUIPMENT