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POULTRY RANGE SHELTER

D. F. KING, *Poultry Husbandman*

MOVABLE RANGE SHELTERS are very important in successful poultry raising, and for two reasons. First, they make it possible to use clean ground – not infested with worm eggs and the like. Second, greater use can be made of forage crops during the growing season.

Usually chicks are brooded in a permanent building located close to other farm buildings for convenience. Within a few years, the soil around such a building becomes infested with worm eggs, coccidiosis organisms, and other disease-producing parasites. Under such conditions, it is very difficult to raise healthy chickens if they are allowed to range outside.

Until about 8 weeks old, chicks can be kept inside the brooder house without too much exposure to diesases. Up to this age, chicks do not need much exercise and green feed, and their growth is not retarded much by confinement. However, between 8 and 20 weeks of age, chicks develop much better when allowed to range on clean ground. By use of range shelters, chickens can be raised in the sunshine on areas seldom used by older chickens.

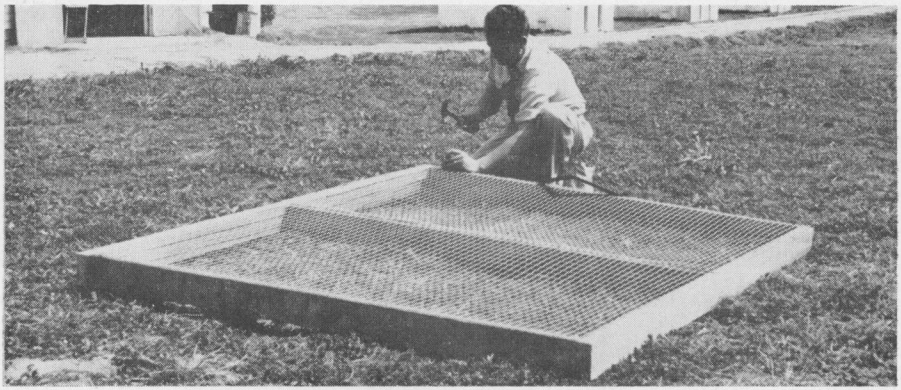
The range may be a pasture used by other livestock or an area seeded to crops especially for chickens. Good grazing, or forage, will lower the cost of grain and mash feed by 10 to 20 per cent. The vitamins, minerals, and proteins supplied by the forage build strong vigorous pullets. The Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station has found crimson clover, white Dutch clover, ladino clover, lespedeza, and alfalfa to be excellent green feed for chickens. Any pasture crop adapted to the available soil type will be satisfactory for pullets.

The Alabama Station has built and used many different types and sizes of range shelters in the last 15 years. As more shelters were needed, the faults of the previous types were corrected. The shelter described here is highly recommended. It is small enough to be moved easily either by dragging or hauling on a wagon or truck. It is inexpensive to build. The aluminum roof is durable, light in weight, and provides a cooler house even in midsummer than other types of roofing. This shelter accommodates 50 pullets. With such a number, it is easier to keep down contamination around the shelter than it is with larger flocks.

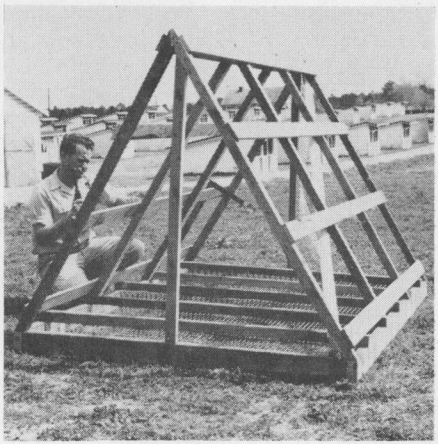
Both ends of the shelter are covered with 1-inch poultry netting to protect the pullets from predatory animals. The floor is covered with 1 by 2-inch welded wire fabric, which keeps the birds from coming in contact with their droppings. The wire fabric is durable and will last many years.

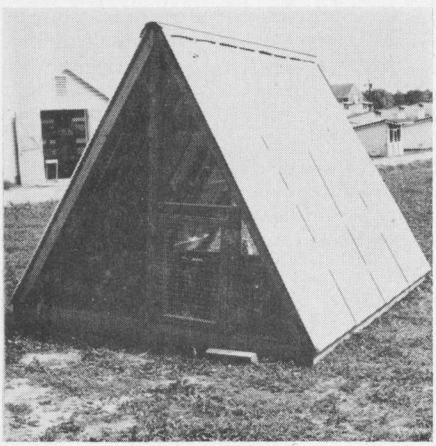
The shelter is easily built. Any one familiar with hammer-and-saw carpentry can build it by following the pictures and description.

AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION
of the ALABAMA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
M. J. Funchess, *Director* Auburn, Alabama



Base of the shelter is 6 feet wide and 8 feet long. It is formed by placing four 2-by-4's on edge, and by nailing ends of 8-foot pieces to the two 6-foot lengths. A third 6-foot 2-by-4 is placed halfway between the ends. This center brace is fastened by nailing through each of the 8-foot side pieces. The 1 by 2-inch welded wire fabric (two pieces 4 by 6 feet) is then stapled to the top of base frame. Five 2 by 2-inch roost poles 6 feet long are placed on top of wire equal distance apart crosswise of base and nailed at each end. The wire is stapled to undersides of the poles. Four sets of rafters 6 feet long cut from 2-by-2's are nailed to base and to a 1 by 4-inch ridge pole 8 feet long. The end walls are framed by a 2 by 2-inch stud nailed at base and ridge pole as added roof support. Two 1 by 4-inch boards 10 feet long are used as diagonal braces on underside of the rafters.



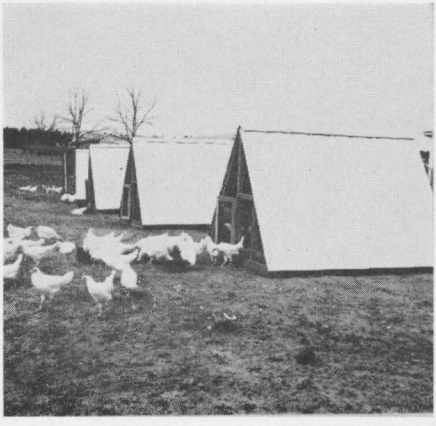


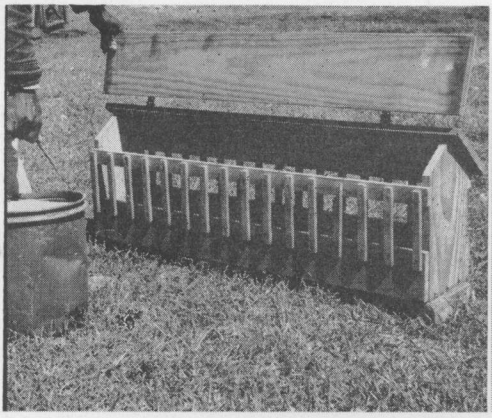
Four 1 by 4-inch boards 8 feet long are used on each side of roof as decking. Four pieces of 24-inch aluminum roofing 6 feet long are then nailed to decking strips. A piece of ridge roll 8 feet long is then nailed on the ridge. The door frame and door, as shown, are both made of 2 by 2-inch material. Both ends of house are covered with 1-inch poultry netting. All exposed wood is painted with creosote paint, or some good wood-preserving material. It is much easier to do this before the wire is stapled in place than later. Four bricks or flat stones are used to keep the base of shelter off the ground.

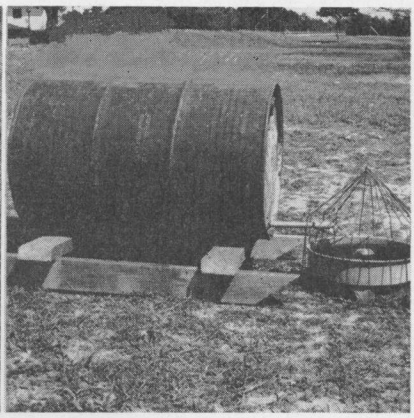
When built as described in this leaflet, this shelter is easy to move. It can be lifted on a wagon or truck if it is to be moved a considerable distance. For short distances, it can be loaded on a sled and pulled by a mule or car. By not building permanent runners under each shelter, one sled may be used to move several shelters. If chickens are in the shelter when it is moved, care must be taken to prevent the birds from piling into one end and smothering. When the shelter is moved only a short distance, accumulated manure under the wire floor is collected and hauled to nearby fields and distributed. Thus, pullets returning to the old location cannot scratch in their droppings.

Because early-hatched chicks are more profitable than chicks hatched late in spring, it is often necessary to place pullets in shelters while weather is still cold. This can be done if the north end of shelter is covered with paper or sacks as shown. With such protection, the shelter may be used for well-feathered birds even when temperature is near freezing. Under these conditions, feed hoppers and water fountains are placed inside the shelter or in a protected location so that the pullets can eat and drink without too much exposure to cold winds. When pullets are first placed on range, they are confined to the house for a short period to become adjusted to their new home.

If several shelters are used, they may be placed quite close together for convenience in feeding and watering. Pullets will usually remain in the same shelter each night if all are of about the same age and there is little difference in the shelters used. During late spring and summer, it is highly desirable to provide natural shade for the shelters. If this is not possible, at least the feed and water containers can be located under temporary shade so that the pullets can eat and drink throughout the day. Coolness is essential to normal feed consumption and good growth.







Each growing pullet should have from 2 to 3 inches of hopper space. A hopper like that shown at left can be made by using 1 by 8-inch boards for the bottom and ends, 1 by 6-inch boards for the sides, and 1 by 10-inch boards for the top. The 1 by 1-inch strips are spaced to give 2-inch openings. One of the top boards is hinged so that hopper can be filled from the top. The barrel water system shown at right is equipped with an inexpensive float valve. A long trough with a suitable guard if available can be substituted for circular pan shown. Runners under the barrel makes it possible to "sled" water to the range if running water is not available.

BILL OF MATERIAL

	Number	*Size*	*Purpose*
Floor:	2	2″ x 4″ x 8′-0″	Floor frame
	3	2″ x 4″ x 6′-0″	Floor frame
	2	48″ x 6′-0″ (welded wire fabric)	Floor covering
	5	2″ x 2″ x 6′-0″	Roosts
Roof:	8	2″ x 2″ x 6′-0″	Rafters
	1	1″ x 4″ x 8′-0″	Ridge pole
	8	1″ x 4″ x 8′-0″	Decking
	2	1″ x 4″ x 10′-0″	Diagonal bracing
	8	24″ x 6′-0″	Aluminum roofing
	1	8′-0″ long	Aluminum ridge roll
Ends:	1	2″ x 2″ x 10′-0″	Door and door frame
	2	2″ x 2″ x 6′-0″	End studs
	1	36″ x 10′-0″ (1-inch poultry netting)	Ends and door covering
Miscellaneous:	1 lb.	16d common nails	
	½ lb.	8d common nails	
	1 lb.	poultry wire staples	
	2 lb.	roofing nails	
	1 pair	2-inch butt hinges	
	1	door hook	