

How to make an Urban Chicken House with 2 levels



This is for people with a small amount of space, who would like to keep chickens in their backyard. This design offers the opportunity to keep up to 8 chickens on only 4 feet by 4 feet of yard. Perfect for the urban farmer!

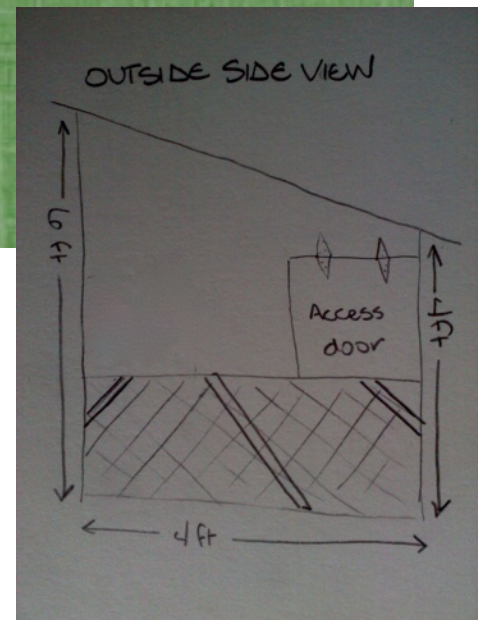
This design is for the semi-experienced carpenter. If this is your first wood working project, talk with the pros at your local hardware or lumber supply store.

Supplies needed:

2"x4"x8' lumber (4)
2"x2"x8' lumber (8)
Plywood sheets 4'x8'x1/2" (3)
1"x6"x5' lumber (1)
Screws One box ea. : 1 inch wood screws, 2 inch wood screws
2 inch hinges (6)
Clear corrugated plastic Two 2'x12' lengths
Paint (1/2 gal. waterproofing paint)
Paintbrush
20 ft length roll of 24" wide chicken wire (1)
Hook and eyes closures for the doors (3)
1 inch L-brackets (12)
Handles (2)

Tools needed:

Miter "chop" saw (for cutting the 2x4's and 2x2's)
Screwdriver
Circular saw (for cutting plywood)
3 inch paintbrush
Protective eyewear
Construction sized stapler



Cutting

1.

Measure the pattern and cut the materials into the needed lengths. Be sure to wear protective eyewear while using power tools. Leather gloves would be appropriate also. Keep all fingers away from blades!

Two of the 2"x4's should be cut to 6' in length for the taller of the two corners with your miter saw. The other two should be cut to 4' in length for the shorter of the two corners.

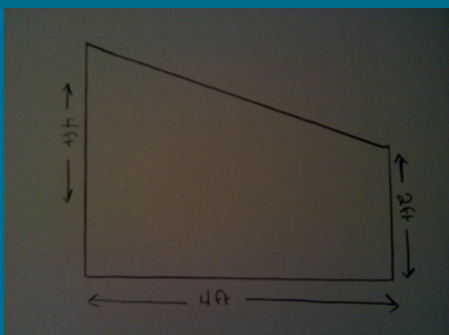
One sheet of plywood should be cut into equal halves of each 4'x4' with the circular saw. These are for the bottom floor of the chicken house and for the tall side. One of these pieces needs to have a 12"x12" hole cut in it off-center, but away from any of the edges, for the access door to the lower level. The other 4'x4' piece needs to be cut in equal halves again to make another door for reaching into the nesting boxes.

Cut one of the 2"x2's into two 4' lengths for the longer corner braces.

Cut another of the 2"x2's into two 4' lengths for the shorter corner braces. Cut two more into 3'10" lengths for a total of 4 lengths for the corner braces of the floor.

One sheet of plywood should be cut at an angle to make the two slanted sides, and 2"x4' will be leftover for other uses later. One of the sides should have an 18"x18" square cut from the corner of the taller side. This is for the access door for putting in food and water. See picture at left: (Diagram is not to scale.)

Two pieces of plywood should be cut into 12"x12" squares. Cut four pieces of the 2"x2"s in to 10" lengths and then cut of the corners at a 90 degree angle for the leg braces. Cut the 1"x6" into a 5 ft. length for the walkway



Assembly

1.

Assemble upper story. Using the 4x4 piece of plywood that has the hole in it for the floor, screw the four 3'10" lengths along the edges using the 1" screws. These form the braces of the bottom corners and serve to stabilize the structure. Once these are on, put the four sides on using the appropriate lengths of corner braces you have already cut leaving off the door sections. Use the 1" screws for this also.

This should look like a box, with one large 2'x4' section at the bottom missing on the tall side, and one hole for the other door on one of the slanted sides. Compare with picture:



2.

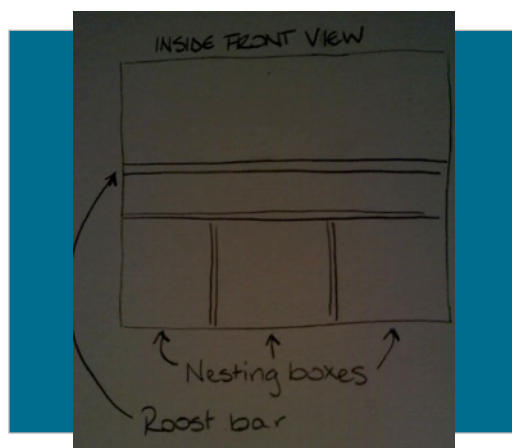
Add the nesting boxes inside the upper story. The 12"x12" squares are placed upright along the back edge of the floor where the long door swings out. Secure them evenly spaced apart with L-brackets. See picture below which has the largest side removed to show the insides:



3.

Use the leftover 4'x2' piece of plywood from cutting the slanted sides to put over the top of the three nesting boxes. This will cover them, since they are going to be directly below the roost. Secure this with the L-shaped brackets.

Pictured in diagram below:



4.

Screw the legs onto the appropriate corners (the longer legs on the longer corners, and the shorter legs on the shorter corners.) Use 2" inch screws to attach the legs. The corners will need to be placed on sides of the corners where they will not obstruct the opening of either door. Each of the legs should extend 24 inches downward to the ground from the bottom of the floor. Add corner braces underneath the bottom floor to support the legs. Place the 10" leg braces underneath the bottom floor and secure with screws to the legs and floor.

5.

Add the doors in their respective places and secure with two hinges per door. Hinges should go at the top of each door, so the doors swing upward.



6.

Working from above, the nest piece to be added is the walkway or "stairs". Secure the 5' length of 1"x6" with the last two hinges from the hole cut in the floor bottom. Be sure that the placement of the stairs does not protrude past the sides of the chicken house. It needs to stay within these sides so that it will be contained by the chicken wire.

7.

The last wooden piece to be added is the roost. It is of the 2"x2" cut into one 4' length and secured by screws from the outside. It should be centered over the nesting boxes, and suspended about 3-4 inches above it.

Painting

Prep for paint by dusting out any saw dust from the cutting. Paint thick layers of the waterproof porch paint using the 3in. brush. Be sure to cover all layers thoroughly. All surfaces need to be waterproofed so that they are rain proof and can be rinsed out with a hose when necessary. Paint the insides first, then the outsides, then the bottom and the legs. Allow to dry completely according to the directions given with the paint before proceeding.

Roof

After all paint is dry, the roof can be added. This is from the corrugated plastic cut into 6 ft lengths and secured with the 1in. screws from the top. Be sure they are placed across from the short side to the tall side, not between the slanted sides. The plastic should extend past the sides to protect from rain.

Wire sides

Wrap the chicken wire on around the outside of the bottom yard area. Keep the bottom edge of the wire as close to the ground as possible. Staple around the legs and the edge running around the bottom floor.

Finishing touches

Add the hooks and eyes on the legs next to the door edges. The long door will have two sets, and the smaller side door will have one. The hooks go in the legs, and the eyes go on the doors. Put one handle on each door for ease of use. (Not pictured.)



Things to remember:

- Once the chickens are living inside, the whole house needs to be moved to a new patch of grass every few days, since the chickens will eat the grass underneath. It can be easily lifted by 2 people.
- Check on your chickens daily to be sure they have adequate food and water.
- Use straw or shredded papers for nesting material.
- Watch that other neighborhood animals don't try to dig under the chicken wire.
- Clean out your chicken house every month or so with a hose and spray nozzle.
- Not all cities will allow keeping chickens within city limits. Be sure to check your local ordinances before purchasing chickens.