

Re: nest boxes and chicken facilities.

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- *From:* unicorn <[someone@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:someone@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx)>
  - *Date:* Sun, 31 Jul 2005 15:51:59 GMT
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diddy wrote:

in thread  
[news:qOHGe.55871\\$Pf3.17387@xx](news:qOHGe.55871$Pf3.17387@xx): "IAN HUNTER" <[IanK.Hunter@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:IanK.Hunter@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)> whittled the following words:

Hi Diddy,

I too don't have regular nest boxes and just use shelves made from scaffold boards; these have a good thick layer of straw. The girls make nice round depressions creating the nests where they lay. The main advantage of using a commercial nest box is that it helps keep the eggs clean. Since the 1st June this year in the UK egg producers are not allowed to wash eggs. But I find that its only when its very wet outside, that I occasionally get muddy foot prints on the eggs.

My eggs are nice and clean, but i clean the nest boxes daily and replace the soiled litter. I just scoop out the dirty stuff. 24 nest boxes aren't hard to maintain. I use a kitty litter scoop with the shredded newspaper and shake, and the dry papers shake right out, and the dirty ones stick and i toss that away. I clean the floors once a week.

Regarding your use of the cardboard boxes, I would compost them rather than burn them, but by burning them you are possibly helping to keep parasites (red mite) under control.

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I would install perches; they only need to be lengths of timber secured across the hen house, for the chicken its like roosting in trees. As your girls are exploring all around the farm/barns then perches in the other barns could help too.

They find plenty of places to perch, they especially prefer the ladders, and there are several out there.

I do understand your points regarding the costs, my chickens are free range and I sell the eggs at a price that reflects that. Even though there are shops selling cheap eggs, and mine are more expensive, I normally find I have more customers than eggs.

Why is free range more expensive? In the winter, I would think feed costs would be more. But in the summer they are out eating grasses/weeds/insects. Summer costs for me so far are pretty cheap. Come winter, however, i imagine the costs are going to saor.

Free range are more expensive because the birds are harder to look after, less salable eggs are collected and mortality rates can actually be higher that in the intensive farming.

One person can care for 30-50,000 birds in an intensive farming enterprise. With occasional help when birds are culled etc. You just can't do that with free range, so you miss out on the economies of scale that the intensive housing get. Add that to the fact that your birds are NOT in a climate controlled environment and you get less eggs. Then you consider that there is no chance to artificially lengthen the day with the free range birds so that natural eggs laying can be controlled. (When light gets to less that 16 hours a day hens stop laying or radically reduce their output unless they are in their first lay.)

You also have to consider that the temperament of the free range keeper is somewhat different to the intensive farmer. The free ranger is more

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likely to be trying for organic certification (and the associated boost in their egg prices). Organic IS expensive. There may be many benefits of organic but the one thing that can almost always be counted on is higher production cost.

It is a good thing that organic has such a great reputation, because based upon appearance most organic food stuffs would fail the consumer visual test completely. I did know a couple of organic free range egg producers. Hormones were out, as where antibiotics and most feed additives/ supplements. Their birds had to live or die, basically without much in the way of assistance from modern anything. Sick birds were simple destroyed as effective treatment for many diseases were on the 'no no' list. They produced a reasonable product, but their production costs per egg were double those of other free range growers.

anyway I have digressed from the original response, but I hope it answers your question.

Matt

Matt

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