

Western SARE How-To



Quick Guide

May 2021

Choosing Between Two Good Chicken Housing Systems



Photo by Nicole Carrea.

In areas like Hawai'i, with a high reliance on imported food, it is important for local farmers to have the necessary information to produce and process meat faster, humanely and profitably.

For people raising broiler chickens, different housing options are available. Moveable cages that allow chickens to flock, as they do naturally, and eat bugs from the grass can produce a healthier animal, cut feed costs and produce a tastier meat.

Two such caging methods are the Hubbell Bubble and WARE system.

Both methods are designed to be set on the ground so that chickens are directly in contact with grass. They are to be moved to a new spot once a day. Both types of caging provide protection from predators while giving chickens access to insects found in the soil.

WARE cages are smaller but can be moved by one person. About 25 chickens is an acceptable stocking rate for WARE caging. The Hubbell Bubble is larger and taller and allows for a higher stocking rate, but uses more space and requires two people to move the cage.

Western SARE funded a farmer-led project to determine the advantages of each caging method. While both provided better predator protection than traditional poultry housing, the larger Hubbell Bubble method allowed for higher growth rates than traditional housing and more protection from predators than the WARE system, although the WARE system was better for smaller spaces.

What Are Quick Guides?

SARE and state Extension services produce a variety of how-to publications, bulletins and project reports.

Western SARE Quick Guides distill this information into a short, easy-to-digest format. They are intended as a supplement to these more extensive publications.

Producers adopting new practices are encouraged to consult with local Extension agents and ag professionals.

Selecting a Caging System for Chickens

Hubbell Bubble System

Information about and construction plans for Hubbell Bubble cage can be found online in “An Introduction to Natural Farming Poultry Production in Hawai’i, The Wave of the Future” at ctahr.hawaii.edu/oc/freepubs/pdf/SA-17.pdf. The system uses inexpensive construction materials and energy requirements are very low. Materials recommended include three sizes of board, staple gun and staples, door hinges, poultry wire net, screws, galvanized or plastic roofing, and plastic ties.

WARE System

Materials and plans for the smaller WARE cage can be found at pet and animal feed stores. The project leader built hers using the design included here. They can be built using wood or even PVC pipe as a frame that’s then covered with standard chicken wire. A small tarp partially covering the top provides shade, or several cages can be shades simultaneously with a large tarp.

Benefits You May See

The Hubbell Bubble compared to WARE

- Better growth rates and higher productivity
- Allows for more movement into shady areas during hot times of the day
- Gives more surface area of grasses and weeds and reduces the consumption of broiler mix
- Reduces stress with less vocalizing, struggling, and running away when being picked up
- Provides for more protection from predators

WARE compared to the Hubbell Bubble

- Much easier to move (one person can move it)
- Needs less land space

Steps to Take

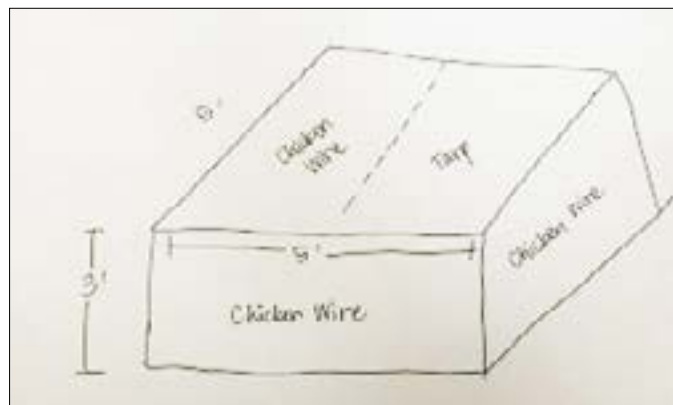
Choosing a caging system is only one of many decisions a new producer will need to make. It’s also important to know that you can process and market your broilers using a moveable caging system before starting or transitioning to the alternative method. Regulations vary, so consult your local Department of Agriculture or university extension service. Also create a thorough business and marketing plan.

And when it comes time to build cages, both systems work, so be sure to choose the system that works best for you.

Learn More About This Project

Final Report: projects.sare.org/project-reports/fw19-344/

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Basic plans of a WARE-style cage.

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