

So what kind of coop do I need?

There is no set rule but there are some designs that are preferred for certain breeds. Some breeds have special considerations such as feathering or energy level that do much better in certain coop designs.

As for the main structure, the size is up to you, how many birds you want to keep, the space you have available for a structure, etc. The coop needs to provide protection from the elements, fresh air and as much natural light as possible. To be more specific about options or materials they are broken down for your consideration below.

Roof

Use a good roofing material like fiberglass shingles to keep water from seeping into the structure. The coop should be kept dry inside to reduce the risk of bacteria growing which is very bad for you and your birds.

Floor Material

The floor should be either wood or concrete to discourage vermin and prevent animals from burrowing in. Many breeders will also add a bedding material to the floor for the birds to walk in. It can be much easier to rake up droppings on the floor if there is a layer of wood shavings or wood pellet bedding on the floor rather than having to scrape the floor to clear out droppings. Some breeders use a wire floor which has catch pans under them to collect the droppings and keep the pigeons off the dropping entirely. They just empty the pans when they get full. This is usually done with small coops which are made to hold your pigeons but not people.



Wire

There are many options for wire to use for doors, windows or fly pens but it's recommended to use a small gauge of wire to keep small wild birds out. They steal your pigeons feed and can spread lice and mites and diseases to your pigeons if they are in steady contact with them or drinking and eating their food. A small ½ inch welded mesh wire is a good choice.

Perches or Roosting Spaces

Provide roosting and nesting areas for your bird. There are some design considerations based on the breed of pigeons you raise. For example, breeds that have large feathers on their feet such as English Trumpeters, do better in a loft with perches that are platforms that allow the birds to roost without barriers around the feet that damage feathers. Examples are:



Other breeds such as Standard or Indian Fantails which have large tails, do well with more floor space and very few if any perches which will keep them walking on the floor and not flying around and potentially getting their wings caught up in the tail feathers causing them to get bent out of shape or twist tail feathers. Walk boards are an alternative to perches for breeds with large tails because they allow the birds to roost or walk around but offer less chance for the birds to damage their tails, or large muffs on their feet.

Many breeds do just fine in a coop that provides a roosting compartment for each bird, much like cubby holes, hence the name “pigeon holes”. This allows the bird to roost without competing for a space. This is good for some of the more aggressive breeds such as Modena’s, Jacobins and homing pigeons.

There are many options for creating roosting spaces. Some examples are shown below.



Multiple Sections

Sometimes it's very helpful to separate the cocks from the hens to control population. It's also very helpful to have a pen for very young birds that are weaning off their parents. Placing young birds in a general population pen can sometimes lead to the older aggressive cocks picking relentlessly on the babies and sometimes injuring them, or scalping them.

If you want to control the numbers of babies you have you should have separate pens for the males (cocks) and females (hens) to live in so they don't breed constantly or until you want them too.



Nest Boxes

Nest Boxes are a similar consideration. They range from the very simple to very elaborate with several functions the breeder can take advantage of. Simple designs are as easy as providing a small nest box or bowl, placed on a shelf in the coop. Or a series of pigeon holes which you can put straw in for the birds to nest, lay eggs and raise babies. More elaborate nest compartments will have a front with a small door which can be closed to keep a pair in the box for mating up. These normally are made with space for two sections to provide 2 nest spaces. When they have raised the first set of babies to a point of about 2 weeks old, they will then lay eggs in the second space and begin setting the next clutch while they are still raising the babies they have. This allows them to be very attentive to the eggs and babies in a single nesting area. These are normally made inside the main coop and the birds are allowed to roam free in and out of the nest box to mingle with the rest of the flock and the pair uses the door to their nesting box to enter and leave.



Individual Breeding Pens

Sometimes people will make a completely separate breeding cage which they lock a pair into and provide food and water to that pair and the pairs stays in the breeding pen through the entire breeding season raising babies in isolation and as babies are weaned off their parents they are moved into the general coop area to grow to maturity.



Flying Breed Considerations

Performing or flying breeds which get released regularly for flying or training can be housed in a smaller coop. Roller pigeons in particular are housed in small coops called kit boxes, which are built to hold 20 birds max, with a perch for each bird, and very small windows for ventilation only to keep the birds in darkness. When they are released the bright sunlight triggers the rolling performance and they also tend to stay in a tight formation in the air as a group.

Many breeds do just fine in a coop that provides a roosting compartment for each bird, much like cubby holes, hence the name “pigeon holes”. This allows the bird to roost without competing for a space. This is good for many of the flying breeds like Rollers and Racing pigeons.

These can be made or purchased from a pigeon supply company and shipped to your door. If you have any carpentry skills, most are easily made and installed in any configuration you like.



Traps or Trap Doors

For flying breeds it's a good idea to outfit the coop with a set of Traps, which are special opening with rods which will swing in 1 direction. These "Bobs" will swing into the coop but not the other way which allows the birds to re-enter the coop from outside but not let birds inside the coop out. Pigeons can be trained to enter the Trap to get back into the coop so that you don't need to leave the main door open which keeps predators like cats, dogs, or hawks from entering the main coop. You can release the birds to fly through the main door and then close it up and the birds can enter back in at their leisure when they want. There are several designs from very simple to elaborate.



Feeders and Water Founts

Keep them in a dry area so the food doesn't spoil from moisture. Many breeders place them on the floor and purchase feeders and water founts that are covered to prevent the birds from climbing into the container. Only the head of the birds need access to the food or the water.



Fly Pens or Walk Pens

For active birds it can be a nice bonus to have a fly pen which allows the birds to fly from side to side and land on perches on the sides to let them get exercise and fresh air but still be protected from predators. Usually a fly pen will have a wire roof to allow sun light in and is made on the outside of the main coop with an access door to allow the birds to fly in and out at will. Sometimes for show breeds that are not good flyers, a walk pen on the outside of the coop serves just fine to let the birds get fresh air and sunshine.

