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December
1948

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A DISPOSAL PIT FOR DEAD CHICKENS AND TURKEYS

by

E. M. Dickinson

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AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION
Oregon State College
Wm. A. Schoenfeld, Director
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Department of Veterinary Medicine

The disposal of dead birds on the average specialized poultry farm often becomes a burdensome problem that is not satisfactorily handled. The average annual mortality of poultry in the United States is about 20 percent. On a poultry farm with 2000 laying birds, therefore, one may expect to lose about 400 birds during the year. Incineration is the preferred method of disposal, provided the carcasses are completely burned. Carcasses that merely have the feathers burned off and the skin scorched may be left as a serious source of disease. The disposal pit is an effective convenient means for disposal of dead birds that is within the means of all poultry raisers.

SELECTING THE LOCATION

The location of the pit should be selected with care. Some points to consider in selecting the location are as follows:

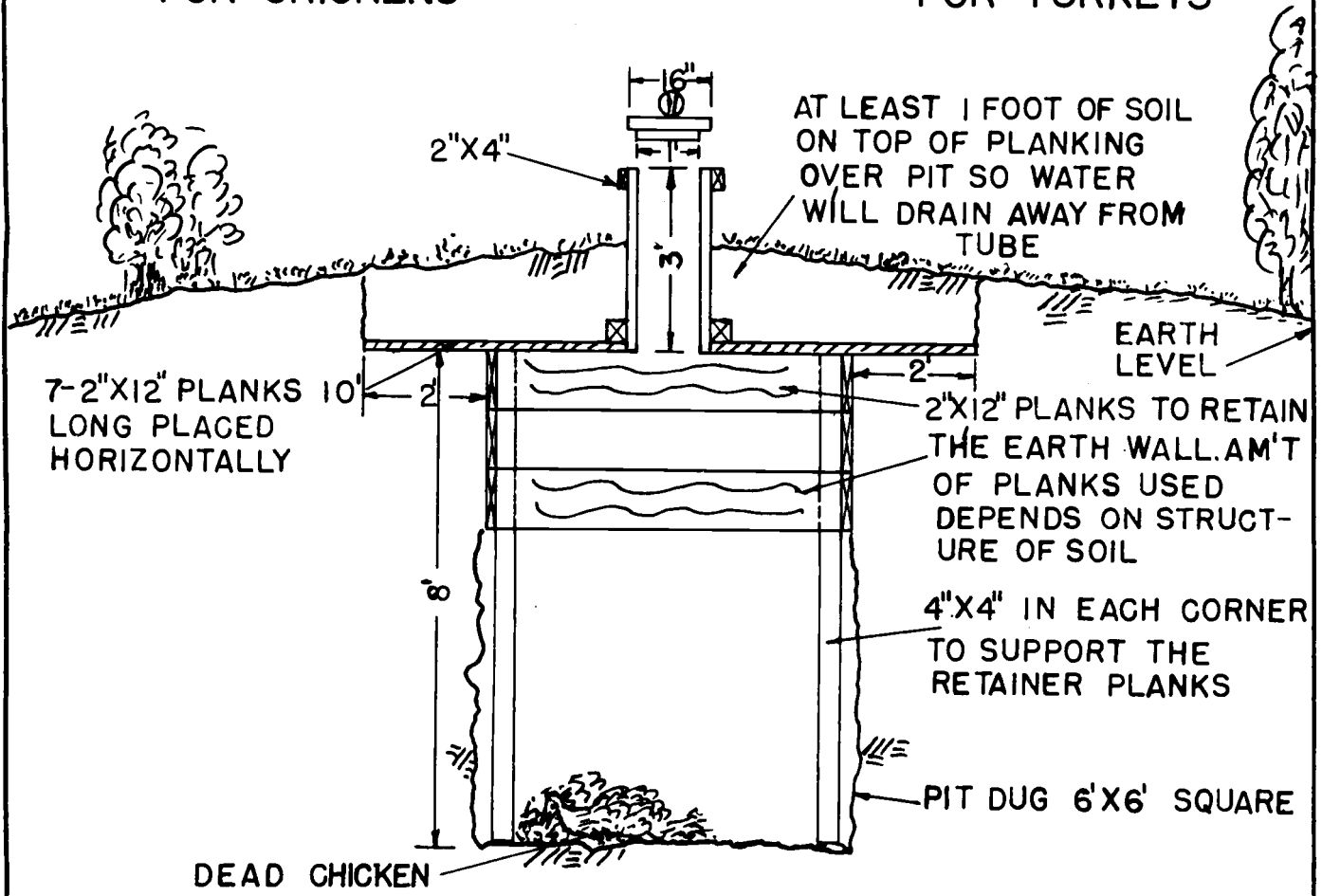
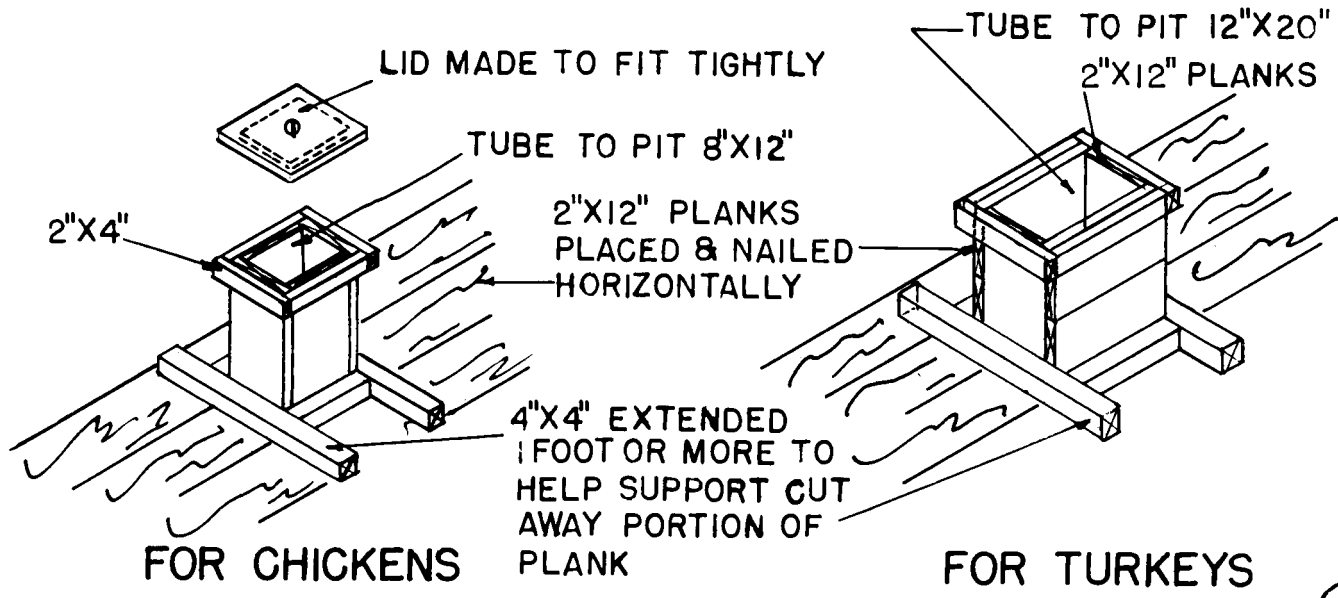
1. The pit should be kept a reasonable distance (at least 150 feet) from the poultry houses or other buildings and the well or spring that provides the water supply.
2. The area selected should have reasonably good drainage. Any area that might flood and fill the pit with water should be avoided.

CONSTRUCTING THE PIT

The most practical size is about 6 feet square by 7 to 8 feet deep. The first foot of earth removed should be over an area 10 feet long by 7 feet wide. The 6-foot square pit is dug in the center of the 10-foot length, thus leaving a 2-foot shelf on each end on which to lay planks for covering the pit (see figure). Seven planks of 2" x 12", 10 feet long, should cover the pit. In the center of the middle plank a hole is cut and framed so that a tube made of 2" x 12" planks 3 or 4 feet long may be fitted, through which the dead birds may be dropped into the pit. For turkeys the tube must be made larger and the hole cut through the two center planks. A tight fitting lid should be made for the upper end of the tube to prevent the escape of odors and the entrance of flies. If the lid and that part of the tube above the ground are given several coats of paint, the lid and tube will not be so readily affected by drying and moisture, and the lid will fit into the tube more evenly. The tube should extend 1 or 2 feet above the ground and at least 1 foot of earth should be filled in over the planking and banked around the tube so that water will drain away from the tube.

If the soil is firm and well bound together, retaining planks to keep the edge of the pit from crumbling may not be necessary. However, the surest procedure is to provide retaining planks to keep the earth walls from crumbling. To kill flies that may develop in the pit spray the underside of the lid and the inside walls of the drop tube with a fly killing agent, such as DDT, at frequent intervals. When the pit is filled with dead birds the pit should be sealed by filling the rest of the pit and the drop tube with earth.

A pit of this size should provide suitable disposal facilities for dead birds for several years on the average poultry farm. The success of the pit will depend on its careful and tight construction. A pit that is not tightly covered with at least one foot of soil and with a tight fitting lid on the drop tube will soon be a detriment rather than an asset.



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