

# The Humble Chicken Tractor

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The PVC chicken tractor with a new tarp for the top. This is a post about a very useful tool with the most confusing name; The Humble Chicken Tractor. Sometimes I just refer to it as a tractor because I let mother hens and chicks use it, ducks and ducklings, and even rabbits. Rick tried to put me in it in a corner of the yard, but nobody puts baby in the corner, in a tractor in the yard. I digress.

### How to Build and Use a Chicken Tractor

In case you've never heard the term chicken tractor there's a picture on this blog. It is not an adorable little vehicle that chickens ride around upon. It is essentially a mobile

coop in the form of a [Quonset Hut](#) with an open floor.

- The base is composed of standard 3" PVC in a long rectangle (4'x8').
- Strapped to that PVC base is a PVC Quonset structure made of standard 1/2" PVC bent into arches and using standard 1/2" PVC fittings.
- Then chicken wire is stretched and zip tied across the entire structure.
- A door is added to provide access to a shelf on one end and to allow for food and water and entry and exit of the animals.
- The PVC is electrostatically neutral and easily slides over grass without ever damaging it.
- It weighs 30Kg (63 lbs) so it's not heavy at all, just bulky.

Tractors are really durable and useful. This one is six years old at this point. It cost about \$80 to build in materials. The purpose of a poultry/rabbit tractor is to give animals free range capabilities while keeping them safe from predators. Since the bottom of the tractor is open the [poultry can get at the grubs and tasty insects in the lawn](#), and the rabbits can mate and have access to clover and any other pernicious tasty weeds in the lawn.

## **Ecological Benefits**

There is an added benefit is that that animal waste fertilizes the grass. You can see EXACTLY where that tractor has been – it's wise to move it every other day as the animals will wear out the grass. Where it was is stamped grass and dried droppings.

Where it was three moves prior is verdant and green. It's a great way to improve garden beds (the animals turn, till, and fertilize your beds) and it's good for the grass. Everything benefits, especially after a rain.

*The chicken tractor is a great way to protect mother hens and ducks and their babies safe.*

### *Mother Hen*

The tractor is an important part of the enclosed ecosystems at Mezzacello as it is so flexible in its use. I have sheltered a clutch of ducklings and their mother over the pond in this tractor. Mama duck taught her ducklings to swim and hunt for insects. Part of the tractor was on land so the ducklings and mother duck had a place to rest on land. And they were protected from predators.

## **Planning for the Future**

Currently the tractor is home to a clutch of chicken pullets hatched in March. Soon it will be home to more ducklings incubating under a mother duck as I type. Every urban farm needs a tractor. When I replace this work horse model, I will replace it with a collapsible model to make storage easier. But I love the idea. Hit me up. I will share my CAD plans for building this with you, as well as my plan for a collapsible model.