

## Bringing the Community Together: Chicken Tractors

*Ilima Ho-Lastimosa, CTAHR Community Coordinator, Waimānalo Learning Center*

*There is renewed interest in home egg production, in part due to the work of CTAHR extension agents Glenn Fukumoto and Matt Stevenson. About two years ago Matt came out to show CTAHR students how to build a chicken tractor Glenn Fukumoto designed. One of the cages was demonstrated at the Waimānalo station, and donated to Hawaiian Homesteaders when mongoose started killing the chickens. This piece is a report from one of the homesteaders who is now our community coordinator at the Waimānalo station.*

On August 7, 2013, eleven months ago today I picked up twenty baby chicks from Asagi Hatchery in town and brought them home. Not too long after one died, I believe the others ganged up on it, perhaps it was a male, because I swear it was making a lot of noise and after, it was very quiet. Just my own observation, no technical credentials.



It was so exciting to have this new adventure in my yard, in my community. My neighbors were just as enthusiastic as me. And what a journey it has been for all of us. We were amazed at how quickly they grow and mature, none of us had any experience in this area. So the changes were thrilling.

After a couple of months the remaining nineteen were eating us out of house and lot. It was time to share. I thought I gave away eleven and kept eight, but after a few days I noticed we had nine girls left. My dad was so stoked to be the recipient. Throughout the initial stages he was visiting almost daily to see the progress and kokua to the cause, just like my neighbors. We had lots of input from everyone, again no real expertise other than past experience from dad.

I thought that the girls would start laying eggs after about six months, again no experience just my own beliefs that have no scientific support. Not so. Right around Christmas time we started getting an egg a day, what a cool present! Then more and more. Today I gathered 24 eggs, yes two dozen! Granted it was from the weekend, but fresh no less! And boy do we love getting them, not only our family, but the neighbors and what a great makana when we go visit or need a potluck dish. Some hits, bread pudding (requested often), omelets, egg sandwich and hard-boiled. We sometimes have enough to share at the Waimānalo Co-op Market, where we

Month	Eggs	Feed Costs
August-Nov 2013	0	\$70
Dec-13	36	\$22
Jan-14	225	\$22
Feb-14	226	\$44
Mar-14	263	\$0
Apr-14	249	\$22
May-14	248	\$22
Jun-14	180	\$22
Jul-14	186	\$22
<b>Total</b>	<b>1613</b>	<b>\$246</b>



drop off our eggs and they sell to the community. Apparently our eggs are in high demand there too. People are always intrigued that the eggs are from our yard. It seems so far fetched, but it used to be the norm, paradigm shift in order here for certain.

It is my hope that we can do a backyard demonstration project here in Waimānalo with five to ten families who will kokua each other to make the coupes and raise their chickens together, learning and observing as they go. To me this is the ideal way to perform community building.

Mahalo to Dr. Ted Radovich, the Waimānalo Ag Station and CTAHR for the opportunity to strengthen my community through backyard egg production. It has truly been a wonderful experience for myself, my family and my community. Ke Aloha Kākou!

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 Learn more about constructing a backyard chicken tractor in ***Small-Scale Pastured Poultry Grazing System for Egg Production***  
<http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/oc/freepubs/pdf/lm-20.pdf>  
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