

Overhead Chicken Barn Cart

I made my chicken barn cart in 2010, I guess its celebrating its 16th birthday this year, same as my son Daniel. It is amazing that 16 years later Daniel is working with Smart Ag Solutions to update the design to include remote controls and motors.

People like to ask where I got the idea, it was not born as a frivolity or luxury, it was born out of an absolute necessity. You see, in 2010 my back was very bad and going out frequently, my father was enjoying his retirement and frequently on vacation and the guy I hired to help around the farm was always calling in sick, and we have heavy roasters in big barns. Getting the mortality out especially in the last week when it is normal to lose 100-200 of the 4.0kg birds everyday, more if you have heat or an underlying disease problem in the barn.

Every technique known to man was tried, I would throw and carry the birds over to the loadout side doors, I would get them in the windrow and then spend hours and hours carrying them out 2 handfuls at a time, then I started to use a heavy construction wheelbarrow. So picture this - Dad's on vacation, my hired man didn't show up, my back is hurting, I have 800 pounds of material to remove between these 2 waterlines, so the wheelbarrow gets loaded to capacity, lifted, and we start moving down the barn, the wheels filled over their rated pressure squat down and sink into the litter and then everything has to stop because you have a rooster or two sitting there not knowing a freight train is about to run him over. He's market weight and you don't want to hurt him, so you stop, gently encourage him out of the way, look down the barn and you just know this is going to play out again and again and again until you get to the end. At the end you throw open the overhead door and that's when you put equipment that stays in your barn, (your wheelbarrow), onto the dirtiest piece of equipment on your farm, (the bucket you use to move mortality). All the while my back is screaming for mercy, it is screaming, "Stop, please do something else!" That's when I declared, I'm not putting in another flock without a cart suspended from the ceiling.

This was not a new idea, litter carrier systems were in every large animal barn 100 years ago, but I hadn't seen one in a chicken barn. What should I build? Well litter carrier track was no longer made, it would be impossible to source 500 ft of good quality used track out of barns 50 feet here and 75 feet there, so I made my own.

At the time I thought I would be doing chores for another 50 years, it is going into a corrosive environment, I did not have not plans to paint it before I installed it or ever so I made it heavy duty. It seems like I overshot, these carts and track will easily outlast the lifespan of the barns they are in. What all do I do with my cart? Mortality is just one thing but it is worth mentioning barn setup is a breeze - pails full of feed and equipment glide easily from one end of the barn to the other without disturbing your bedding material. My favorite part is maintenance and repairs - so many times I lugged my tools down the barn, put them up on a 5 gallon pail so they didn't get dirty only to have the tools go upside down into the manure. I now put my tools, replacement motor, feeder pans, drinker parts on the cart and park it close to where I'm working, never more

than 30 feet away. On the mortality front, I think it offers perfect biosecurity. A tractor bucket is positioned outside the overhead door, loaded cart is parked beside, birds are thrown individually or pails are dumped without any contamination. Inside barn boots stay inside, outside barn boots stay outside, no inside equipment touches any outside equipment, especially pails on the ground or that stinky mortality bucket.

More than once I've been called a lazy chicken farmer - I never thought that - I'm a smart farmer that makes work easier in the barn to minimize the pain I feel so I can get more things done in a day and raise my profitability. Without the overhead cart I don't think I'd even be a chicken farmer, certainly wouldn't be raising heavy roasters. With the overhead cart I just keep building more barns.



2010 Design



2026 Omnivore Trolley Design