

Conditions and guidelines for keeping poultry on allotments

Introduction

Under the terms of the North East Lincolnshire Council Allotment Tenancy clause 4 (n) tenants are permitted to keep 'reasonable numbers of hens, bees and rabbits' on their allotment plot. Permission should be sought in writing and will be confirmed in writing and conditions will be monitored during regular site inspections. Permission will not be granted for the keeping of cockerels. Permission may not be granted based on information provided by The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in the event of bird flu epidemic or other threatening disease. For the purposes of this policy and under the terms of the allotment tenancy agreement 'livestock' refers to hens, bees and rabbits. This document refers to Poultry only for applications to keep bees or rabbits please contact the Allotment Officer on 01472 323394. No more than 12 birds are permitted per plotholder. The Council reserves the right not to allow fowl on any allotment plot. For further advice the Council may contact DEFRA , NSALG (National Society for Allotment and Leisure Gardeners) ARI (Allotment Regeneration Initiative).

The following information has been confirmed by the DEFRA that any poultry kept is voluntarily registered with DEFRA. For further information you can visit the DEFRA website on w2.defra.gov.uk or you can call on 08459 33 55 77

Poultry Accommodation

The minimum **internal** floor space per bird is 4sq ft to a maximum floor space of 48 sq ft (i.e. an 8' x 6' shed will house 12 hens).

The minimum **external** floor space per bird is 2 sq ft to a maximum floor area of 24 sq ft (i.e. shed and external run will not cover more than 72 sq ft). Hens must have continuous daytime access to open air runs, which must be moved regularly to avoid 'fowl sick' or muddy conditions that could lead to ill health or discomfort.

The above dimensions should provide proper shelter from the elements and, as appropriate, a means of exercise which may be extended by the provision of wire fenced runs. A means of access to the shelter must be available to the poultry at all times, except where cleaning and disinfection etc., is being carried out. Any shelter should permit the stockperson to stand and inspect the birds therein. The accommodation will require cleansing and disinfection and all litter etc., needs to be disposed of in secure containers or located well away from any shelter or run. Nest boxes, roosting areas and perches must be properly located. Floors should

be provided of wooden construction. All exercise runs shall be escape and predator proof.

Ventilation

Sufficient fresh air should be provided by means of doors or other apertures. Birds should be protected from draughts and it is recommended that the accommodation/shelter entry points face due south. During hot weather, particularly warm humid conditions, all birds must have access to an exercise area. In certain cases shading may be required.

Health

Important indications of health are alertness, clear bright eyes, good posture, vigorous movements if unduly disturbed, active feeding and drinking and clean, healthy skin, shanks and feet. Attention should be paid to any departure from normal.

The early signs of ill health may include changes in food and water intake, in preening, in 'chatter' and in activity. There may also be a drop in egg production and changes in egg quality such as shell defects.

Lighting

A means of artificial lighting must be provided, which is adequate to inspect all birds on the site. Poultry must have access to a minimum of 8 hours daylight during any day.

Feeding and Watering

Water must be available at all times and all equipment kept clean and in good order. Feed should be kept in vermin proof containers. Any diet must be properly balanced for the type of bird and given in sufficient amounts to ensure the proper well being of the animals. The risk of drinking water freezing during winter months must be considered.

Stocking Rates

All poultry must be able to stand, turn round and stretch their wings, and have sufficient space to perch or sit down without interference from other birds. The stocking rate will not only be dependent upon the ability of the stock person, but also the type of poultry kept. All poultry must have access to an exercise area.

Fire Precautions

Plans for dealing with fire should be made. All inflammable materials i.e. straw, waste litter and empty bags, must be stored well away from poultry accommodation and exercise areas. A means of controlling any small fire should be available and the stockperson's (or deputy) emergency telephone number and contact address known to the site operator and/or landowner.

Frequency of Inspection

All birds must be inspected at least twice daily. The stockperson/site operator must allow the Council's animal welfare representative to inspect the poultry at any time.

Disease Control

Any sick or injured birds must be removed immediately and treatment provided. The name and address of the Veterinary Surgeon must be known to the site operator.

The cause of any disease or injury will be identified and remedial action taken.

Any national disease prevention and/or control programmes must be adhered to.

Cleansing and Disinfection

The accommodation and associated equipment should be regularly cleaned and disinfected. It is advisable to de-stock sites and allow a minimum 7 days rest period. Only good quality litter originating from premises where poultry are not kept should be used.

Transport

Any container used to transport poultry should be clean, in good repair and of a type suitable for the type of bird to be moved. All birds must be handled with due care. **The Welfare of Animals (Transport) (England) Order 2006** lays down provisions with regard to the loading, transport and unloading of poultry.

Improvement Notice

Where it is deemed necessary, in the interest of the welfare of any bird kept, to effect improvements to the accommodation or overall management of a site, Notice will be served accordingly. In certain circumstances immediate rectification may be directed.

General

- The term “poultry” includes hens, table poultry (chickens), turkeys, geese, ducks and quail, however **North East Lincolnshire Council Allotment Rules only permit hens to be kept on allotments (Clause 4 n). For the purpose of these Guidelines, poultry specifically means hens.**
- Whatever the system, the most important factor is the welfare of the animals themselves;
- Comfort and shelter;
- Readily accessible fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour;
- Freedom of movement;
- The opportunity to exercise normal behavioural patterns;
- Light during the hours of daylight and a means of inspecting the birds at any other time.
- The prevention, diagnosis and treatment of vice, injury, parasitic infection and disease; and
- Emergency arrangements in the event of fire, flood, electrical failure.