



Conditions and guidelines for keeping poultry on allotments

For the purpose of these Guidelines, poultry specifically means chicken hens.



Updated: October 2025

It is a legal requirement to register your flock with DEFRA, regardless of size. You must register within one month of keeping poultry. **You're breaking the law if you do not register.**

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 was established to ensure the humane treatment of animals. Anyone who is cruel to an animal, neglect it or does not look after its welfare needs, may be banned from owning animals, fined up to £20,000 and or sent to prison. If the Council have good reason to believe that a tenant has failed to meet the needs of animals kept on their allotment, they will take steps to end the tenancy and may report the Tenant to the RSPCA.

- The Tenant must be certain they have the time to care for the animals, visiting them at least once a day, every day.
- The Tenant must be confident they can afford to keep the animals.

Introduction

The maximum numbers of chickens the Tenant can apply is twelve (12).

Poultry Accommodation –

Internal - The minimum internal floor space per bird is 0.18m² (2sq ft) to a maximum floor space of 2.3 m² (24sq ft) (i.e. a 6' x 4' shed will house 12 hens). Chickens will seek a raised position to roost and should therefore be provided with perching facilities.

External - The minimum external floor space per bird is 1m² (10.7sq ft) to a maximum floor area of 12m² (129 sq ft). All exercise runs shall be escape and predator proof.

Combined – The coup and external run will not cover more than 14m² (153sq ft).

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 change 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.

Worming – Poultry require regular worming.

Feather Pecking – Can lead to more serious injuries and even cannibalism.

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 always be available 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.

Frequency of Inspection - All birds must be inspected at least once daily. The Tenant must allow the NELC, or their representative may inspect the poultry at any time.

Disease Control - Any sick or injured birds must be removed immediately and treatment provided. Any national disease prevention and/or control programmes must be adhered to. As a registered poultry keeper, you will automatically be sent any Legal control measures from the Government.

Cleansing and Disinfection - The accommodation and associated equipment should be regularly cleaned and disinfected. Neglecting to clean your coup regularly puts your flock at risk of infection.

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 chicken hens to be kept on allotments (Clause 4 n).

If you intend to keep chickens on your plot and can comply with the guidelines, please ensure you complete the relevant application form before acquiring any birds or building a coup space.

Any queries regarding this document should be directed to:

The Allotment Team

Tel 01472 324501

Allotments.enquiries@nelincs.gov.uk