

CONDITIONS AND GUIDELINES APPLICABLE TO THE KEEPING OF POULTRY, RABBITS and BEES ON ALLOTMENT SITES

Animals or livestock except hens or rabbits, must not be kept on Allotment Gardens. Under the 1950 Allotment Act, the keeping of hens and rabbits is permitted on allotments and viewed as an allotment holder's right, so long as they are for the tenants own use and not for business or profit.
Cockerels are not permitted.

Hens or rabbits must not be kept in such a place or in such a manner as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance. Plot holders should obtain prior approval for any plans to site/house hens from the Management Committee and must comply with any applicable husbandry and welfare conditions. No more than 10 birds are permitted per plot holder.
NOTE – the ground area covered by housing and runs for hens counts towards the maximum of 20% of a full-size plot used for structures of all kinds; this limit is scaled for half and quarter plots.

A current contact phone number must be displayed on the plot.

Any part of the Allotment used for keeping hens must be securely and adequately fenced to the satisfaction of the Management Committee. Conduct and structures must comply with the Welfare specifications. The plot holder's Agreement will be terminated in the instance of failure to adhere to these guidelines.

The Management Committee and City Council reserve the right to inspect land and accommodation used for keeping hens at any time, and to not allow hens on any allotment plot if deemed unsuitable. If the Council has cause to investigate complaints of maltreatment, any costs incurred will be passed to the plot holder for payment.

All dead livestock must be disposed of in accordance with the applicable provisions of the Animal By-Products Regulations 2003; this prohibits burning, cremating or burial. DEFRA class livestock as: 'Any animal that is kept, fattened or bred by humans and used for the production of food, wool, fur, feathers, hides and skins or any other product obtained from animals or for any other farming purposes.' This legislation lumps together in a blanket law a few hens in the back garden or on an allotment with the tens of thousands of hens belonging to a commercial farmer; although it does not include pets. Under the Animals By – Products (Enforcement) (England) Regulations 2011 the term catering waste is very wide; it is illegal to feed animals with commercial catering waste or any domestic household kitchen waste; it is therefore illegal under these regulations to feed chickens with vegetable scraps.

Detailed guidance taken from Standards of Animal Welfare for keeping hens.

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 lice, injury, parasitic infection and disease; and

- emergency arrangements in the event of fire, flood or other storm damage.

Accommodation

- The minimum **internal** floor space per bird is 4 sq ft to a maximum floor space of 48 sq ft
- 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.

Furthermore, accommodation 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. All litter, etc. needs to be disposed of in secure containers or in compost bins located well away from any shelter or run. Nest boxes, roosting areas and perches must be properly located. Floors shall be provided and shall be of wooden construction. All exercise runs shall be escape and predator proof.

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 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.

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 wellbeing of the animals. The risk of drinking water freezing during winter months must be considered.

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.

Avian Influenza, which is a highly contagious viral disease affecting the respiratory, digestive and/or nervous system of many species of birds. It is a notifiable disease and any suspected cases must be notified under the Animal Health Act 1981 to your local Animal Health Office.

Disease Control

Any sick or injured birds must be removed immediately and treatment provided.

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.

Other General Points

Land on which birds are kept may become 'fowl-sick'. The time this may take will depend upon stocking rates, soil type and drainage. Muddy conditions lead to ill-health and discomfort.

In addition suitable precautions should be taken to protect against foxes, dogs, cats, rodents and other predators.

Detailed guidance taken from Standards of Animal Welfare for keeping rabbits.

Plot holders should obtain prior approval for any plans to site/house rabbits from the Management Committee and must comply with any applicable husbandry and welfare conditions.

No more than 10 rabbits are permitted per plot holder. NOTE – the ground area covered by housing and runs for rabbits counts towards the maximum of 20% of a full-size plot used for structures of all kinds; this limit is scaled for half and quarter plots.

A current contact phone number must be displayed on the plot.

Any part of the Allotment used for keeping rabbits must be securely and adequately fenced to the satisfaction of the Management Committee.

Structures must comply with the Welfare specifications.

The plot holder's Agreement will be terminated in the instance of failure to adhere to these guidelines.

The Management Committee and City Council reserve the right to inspect land and accommodation used for keeping rabbits at any time, and to not allow rabbits on any allotment plot if deemed unsuitable. If the Council has cause to investigate complaints of maltreatment, any costs incurred will be passed to the plot holder for payment.

Housing

Housing is key to ensuring the welfare of rabbits and should allow expression of natural behaviours.

The housing shall be regularly maintained to a good, tidy standard and free from obvious faults that may cause injury.

The structures shall be sited a minimum of 3 meters from adjacent boundaries abutting residential properties to minimize potential nuisance.

The fully or partially enclosed rabbit hutch or pen shall provide the following:–

- Total floor space of 0.75 m².
- Protection from predators.
- Clean dry bedding material to absorb moisture and odour (e.g. wood shavings or straw).
- Warmth during the colder months and shade during the summer. As a general guide the aim should be to achieve a temperature range of 10°C - 20°C.
- Be draught free but have adequate ventilation.
- A fully enclosed outdoor run that provides a minimum size of 0.75m² per rabbit, providing the rabbit with plenty of space to hop, sit with ears erect and play. Make sure that the rabbits can't dig their way out or predators their way in.
- There should be an additional means of overhead shelter (e.g. shrubs to provide rabbits with protection from direct sunlight, strong wind and driving rain).
- The structure shall be allowed periods of rest to allow the ground to recover.

Food and Water

Rabbits should have continuous and plentiful access to cool, clean and fresh water, feed appropriate to the age and species of rabbits and in sufficient quantities.

Food stuffs shall be stored so they are kept clean, tidy, and properly protected from rodents and other pests.

Health and Welfare

The plot holder is responsible for ensuring that their rabbits are free from distress, pain, injury and disease.

Preventative and/or veterinary treatment

Important indications of health and signs of ill-health are detailed in the DEFRA Code of Recommendations for the Welfare of Rabbits. It is essential that the plot holder should watch for signs of distress or disease and take prompt remedial action.

Vaccinations, injections and similar procedures should be undertaken by competent, trained operators. Care should be taken to prevent injury and unnecessary disturbance of the rabbits.

Ailing or injured rabbits should be segregated wherever possible and treated or, if necessary removed from the allotment plot.

Sanitation

The rabbit hutch or pen should be cleaned a minimum of once a week or more frequently as necessary. Plot holders are responsible for the removal of all soiled matter from the site

Breeding & Profit

Allotment plot holders shall not breed rabbits on the allotment site nor profit from the sale of produce.

Guidelines on Keeping Bees.

Beehives are not allowed anywhere on the Allotment site except with the prior permission of the Management Committee. Such permission may be revoked, subject to expert advice obtained by the Committee.

The number of beehives on any one site will be restricted at the discretion of the Committee.

Plot holders wishing to keep bees must have undergone recognised training and hold valid insurance cover, preferably through membership or affiliation of the British Bee Keeping Association. A copy must be filed with the Committee.

Any recommendations made by a qualified expert or an appropriate Council Officer must be implemented by the plot holder.

Also see Leaflet from British Bee Keeping Association.