

Keeping Hens on Allotments

Introduction.

Under section 9 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006, a person responsible for any vertebrate animal must take all reasonable steps to ensure they meet all of its welfare needs to the extent required by good practice. This applies to both farm and pet animals and includes but is not limited to:

- Need for a suitable diet.

Continuous ready access to an adequate supply of clean, fresh drinking water. Provision of feed of a type and form appropriate to the age, condition and species of animal, and which is fed in sufficient quantities, and sufficiently frequently, to maintain them in good health and to satisfy their nutritional needs. Such foodstuffs should be properly protected from rodents and other wild animals.

- Need for a suitable environment. Hens must have at least 0.2 m² (2 sq ft) of indoor coop space and 0.8 to 1.0 m² (8.6 to 11 sq ft) of outdoor run space per bird.

Continuous access to shelter, free from sharp edges, protrusions etc which could cause injury, and including a clean, dry, well-bedded lying or roosting (for poultry) area large enough to allow all animals using the shelter to lie down (or roost) together at the same time.

- Need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns.

Additional space and a suitable environment for exercise, feeding, dunging and the expression of natural behaviours

- Need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

Competent care and management from those with the knowledge and skill to ensure the animals' wellbeing as well as regular, frequent inspection (at least daily, and more frequently for vulnerable animals such as those that are ill, old or very young) of each animal by a competent person. Suitable steps should be taken to protect the animals on allotments from other animals. Appropriate preventative and/or curative veterinary treatment available at all times. Vaccinations, should be carried out by a veterinary surgeon, who should also advise on worming.

Any allotment holder keeping animals should supply full contact details with a 24-hour phone number on outside of hen house in case of emergencies. Animal owners should supply details of a second contact should they be unavailable. Animal owners should also be encouraged to pass on these details to neighbouring allotment holders who can alert them in case of an emergency.

Suitable arrangements must be made for care of the animals whilst the owner is on holiday or away.

Rearing animals for meat is prohibited.

Allotment holders can contact the RSPCA for either proactive advice on animal welfare issues or to report any concerns about animal welfare.

See website or call Advice Line - 0300 1234 999.