



Barnstaple Town Council's
Guide to keeping chickens
for allotment tenants
in association with the
British Hen Welfare Trust.

Once you have been given permission to house chickens on your allotment, you will need to adhere to the rules set by Barnstaple Town Council. See below:

FURTHER DETAILS TO RULE 2(u) OF THE BARNSTAPLE TOWN COUNCIL ALLOTMENT AGREEMENT

1 GENERAL

- a) No more than **SIX** chickens per plot holder to be kept at any one time. Strictly NO cockerels
- b) 2/3 of the allotment plot must be cultivated, therefore requests to keep chickens will be considered individually and the Town Council will grant or deny permission on the merits of each application.
- c) There will be a £30 deposit payable once permission is granted before constructing a coop on any allotment plot, the deposit will be refunded once all materials brought onto the plot have been dismantled and disposed of away from the site.
- d) All waste generated from the keeping of chickens must be composted in the communal composting area on site which is managed by the Barnstaple Allotment Association.

2 HOUSING OF CHICKENS – INTERNAL

- a) The minimum internal floor space per chicken will be 0.37m² to a maximum total floor area of 2.23m² i.e. a 1.83m x 1.22m shed has a floor area of 2.23m² this will be the minimum requirement to house 6 chickens.
- b) All floors should be kept clean and fresh bedding materials supplied regularly.
- c) Nest boxes, roosting area and perches should not be so high above floor level that chickens have difficulty in using them.
- d) House conditions should at all times be adequate to provide sufficient fresh air, but care should be taken to protect confined chickens from draughts in cold conditions.
- e) Chickens should have easy access to adequate, nutritious and hygienic feed each day, and to adequate fresh water at all times.

3 HOUSING OF CHICKENS – EXTERNAL

- a) The minimum external floor space per chicken will be 2 m² i.e 12m² external floor area will be the minimum requirement to house 6 chickens.
- b) Chickens should have continuous daytime access to open air runs, these runs should be moved regularly to avoid fowl sick or muddy conditions which could lead to ill health or discomfort of the chickens.
- c) Precautions should be taken to protect the chickens from and avoid disturbances by foxes, rodents and other animals.
- d) There should be care not to leave any type of material on a plot which may attract rodents.
- e) A tenant must ensure that the chickens do not cause a nuisance to other plot holders or to local residents.

4 HEALTH

It cannot be too strongly emphasised that chickens kept under any system can be prone to stress, injury and disease if management and husbandry are not of a high standard. The tenant must inspect the chickens at least once daily and injured or dead chickens should be removed promptly. Dead birds will be disposed of offsite.

Ailing chickens, and any chickens suffering from injury such as open wounds or fractures or prolapse of the vent should be segregated and treated.

Land on which birds are kept for prolonged periods may become 'fowl sick', i.e. contaminated with organisms which cause or carry disease to an extent which should seriously prejudice the health of chickens on the land.

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 the normal.

Apart from diet and hygiene, chickens have other basic needs to keep them in a healthy condition. These are: freedom to turn around without difficulty, groom themselves, get up and sit down, rest undisturbed, stretch their legs and body, and perform wing flapping and dust bathing behavior as well as to fulfil other health and welfare needs.

The early signs of ill health may include changes in food and water intake, in preening, in 'chatter' and in activity.

The Town Council reserves the right not to allow fowl on any allotment plot.

Dead birds must be disposed of according to the Animal By-Products Regulations 2003 – the only disposal route is (as Category 2 – waste) to an approved incineration or rendering plant. This aspect has an important implication for small scale chicken keepers, who cannot take any dead animal to a larger keeper, for example, for approved disposal unless they were themselves a registered Environment Agency Waste Carrier.

We have been given some basic tips to help you look after your chickens, from the British Hen Welfare Trust:

Good Husbandry

Hen-keeping is incredibly rewarding and life-enriching! We want you to enjoy your hens, and to be flock wise, so here are some basic tips on keeping your hens happy and healthy.

- **Commitment to daily care** – hens are sentient creatures and therefore need commitment before you even think about keeping some.
- **Secure accommodation** – Wood or plastic? No matter which you choose the most important factor is that your hen house is protected against attacks from predators such as foxes and badgers. A sturdy hen house is best and will also need nest boxes and perches appropriate to the number of hens you keep.
- **Introducing new birds to your flock** – Take care when introducing new pets; ideally new birds should be isolated from the rest of your existing flock for 21 days to stop them passing on any pests or diseases.
- **Daytime access to fresh water and food** – an average-sized adult hen will need 100–120g of feed per day and feed can either be given in a rationed amount daily, or via a feeder that is large enough for several days' feed. We recommend feeding birds within the hen house or under cover to discourage wild birds and rodents. If you must feed outside, ration quantities to ensure feed is eaten quickly and clean up any spillages. Rotate feeding times if you can so wild birds do not learn to congregate. Fresh tap water should be put down each morning and topped up as necessary.
- **Daily coop clean** – Don some rubber gloves and pick up droppings and patches of wet bedding on a daily basis.
- **Weekly coop clean** – A thorough clean should be undertaken weekly, including sweeping out bedding, and using a paint scraper to remove floor debris. A fresh layer of bedding will make your coop cosy again.
- **Good hygiene** – Make sure your coop is cleaned and disinfected on a regular basis with a government approved disinfectant; this can be used monthly.
- **Prevent wild birds and vermin stealing poultry food** – keep your feed bin secure inside your hen house or a shed/garage to prevent access by wild birds and vermin. If you have a rodent problem, control it.
- **Routine health care such as regular worming and treatment for parasites** – routine worming should be carried out three or four times a year using a licensed product. Also regularly check your hens and their coop for external parasites such as red mite.
- **Check whether your birds are in a Higher Risk Area** for Avian Influenza on gov.uk

The most important piece of advice we can give you is to spend a bit of time watching your girls each day (it's very therapeutic!) and you'll quickly learn their normal behavior and how to spot if one or more is out of sorts. Here is a link to our helpful [examination guidelines](#) if you think a hen may be under the weather. Maintaining good husbandry at all times will help you, and your hens. Be flock wise.

All commercial hens are vaccinated against the following diseases:

- Mareks
- Gumboro disease
- Infectious bronchitis of various strains
- Coccidiosis
- Salmonella
- Newcastle disease
- Mycoplasma
- Infectious Laryngio Tracheitis
- Egg drop syndrome
- Avian Rhinotracheitis
- Sometimes Pasturella and E. Coli

Avian Flu

Avian Flu does not have a vaccine and therefore you should be aware of what to do in the event of an outbreak in your area.

Be Flock Wise – register your hens on the Great Britain Poultry Register (GBPR)

We recommend all keepers of pet birds and flocks, small and large, register their birds on the GBPR. Visit this website to register:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/poultry-including-game-birds-registration-rules-and-forms

You can also sign up online to a separate service from APHA (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apha-alert-subscription-service>) to receive free alerts of any outbreaks of avian flu in Great Britain. This advice has been agreed by the BHWT with Defra, Scottish Government and Welsh Government.

Hen Examination Guidelines



We are often asked for health advice and thought it might be useful to give you some guidelines on how best to assess a hen that appears unwell. If you need to talk to a vet having some information to hand can be useful and may help with diagnosis and treatment.

Our advice is to regularly check your hens through handling them and become aware of the following points.

Always check a healthy hen first, then the hen that appears unwell so you can do a comparison.



The Comb

The comb sits on top of the hen's head and should be red, plump and glossy (this often denotes she's in lay). If it's pale, but plump it probably means she's healthy but off lay. If it becomes dry, shriveled or flaky; that's a indicator of poor health.

The Keel

This is the bone going down the centre of the bird and should be well padded with flesh either side. If it protrudes, it means your hen is thin and can denote problems; don't be fooled by a nice set of feathers, they can easily disguise a thin bird.



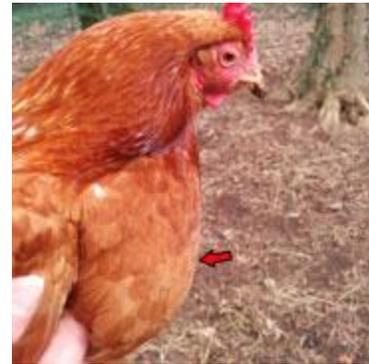
The Vent

This is where the eggs come out. It is also her bottom! Firstly it should be nice and clean; if it's a round 'hole' it means she's off lay, if it's elongated (like a slot) it means she's in lay. If it's dirty your hen may have an upset tummy or an infection.



The Crop

This is your hen's 'shopping basket' where she gathers food to be ground down and passed through to her stomach. Situated at the bottom of her neck, the crop should fill up when she eats and slowly deflate as she passes the food through to her stomach. It should be neither too packed solid with food (that can indicate an impacted crop) nor full of fluid (that can point to sour crop).



The Abdomen

The abdomen area should be rounded and soft, but not feel unusually large. If it is swollen and your hen's legs are slightly splayed feel if the abdomen area is hard and solid or soft and full of fluid. A hard, solid abdomen can denote egg peritonitis and a soft abdomen can denote ascites (fluid in the abdominal cavity).



Demeanour

A healthy hen should be busy and active, scratching the ground, feeding and drinking well (though not excessively) and preening.

A poorly hen will stand hunched and disinterested in her surroundings, although sometimes wet or cold weather makes them hunch and appear cheesed off; just like us they don't like the cold and wet!



Hot Weather Tips



Summer Tips to Keep your Chickens Comfortable

Access to plenty of cool water is an obvious necessity during times of extreme heat.

Shade is also vitally important; hens enjoy sunshine as we do but prefer to shelter from the strength of the midday sun.

Provide dust bath areas for your hens, they will appreciate the chance to get 'clean' especially in warmer weather.

Ensure your hen house is well ventilated; wire mesh across windows can allow better air flow without compromising security.

Warm weather brings out the uninvited guests in your hen house and early summer is a good time to treat your birds for red mite which can cause them irritation during the summer months.

If your hens are feather bare, you may need to apply sun cream to their skin, or ensure they avoid the midday sun; bald hens suffer from sunburn just like we do.



Cold Weather Tips

1. If the weather conditions are extreme and you have an outbuilding with an electricity supply, heat lamps or oil filled radiators can be used to provide extra warmth, but only do this for feather bare birds and do not make the environment 'warm', just lessen the chill.
2. You can cover the coop overnight with an old carpet, blankets, bubble wrap or flattened cardboard to give extra insulation. Deep (10cm+) dry bedding of chopped straw or wood shavings on the floor will help keep birds warm.
3. If you have just a few girls in a large coop/stable or converted shed, putting a large cardboard box on its side, half filled with chopped straw/wood shavings in a corner within the coop/stable will help conserve body heat. Check after dark that they are all sleeping together in the box.
4. Smearing combs with Vaseline will help prevent them getting frostbite, especially if they have large, floppy combs.
5. Access to fresh water is vital. Drinkers will freeze if left out overnight and may split when you try to defrost them in the morning, (do not use a kettle of boiling water on frozen plastic). Bring drinkers in at night and refill in the morning with warm water which hens enjoy, topping up with more warm water during the day.
6. Give your hens extra corn in the afternoon as this will heat them up internally as they digest it overnight.
7. Give them a warm meal using Smallholder Range crumble or pellets mixed with hot water. Just feed enough to ensure it all gets eaten within 30 minutes and repeat the process as necessary.
8. Ensure the hens have shelter in their outside run, they dislike the wind chill and driving rain as much as we do. Erecting wooden boards/plastic sheets/tarpaulin/straw bales against the windward side of their run will help, as will providing some cover above to keep them dry.
9. Cold weather and snow means other animals are hungry too; make sure food is stored safely away from rats and mice, especially at night, and regularly check fences and coop security; hungry foxes are more daring and determined in winter.