



EPAA Livestock Policy

Chickens

Version 1
Adopted 2024

Under the 1950 Allotment Act, the keeping of hens (but not cockerels) or rabbits is permitted on allotments and is viewed as an allotment holder's right, so long as they are for the tenant's own use and not for business or profit. Allotment tenants are not permitted to profit from the sale of produce, or breed hens or rabbits on the allotment site to be sold on.

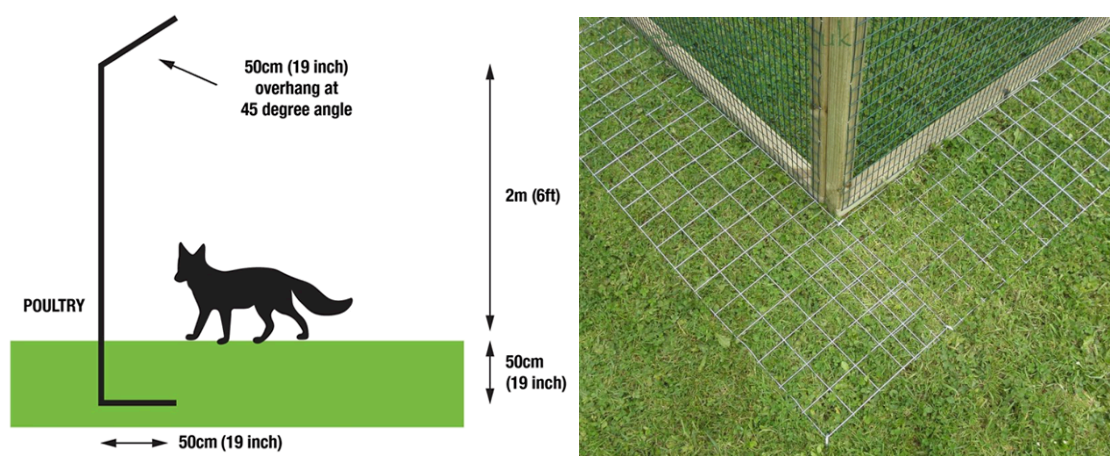
1. Looking after Hens

Keeping chickens as pets is great fun, but if your outdoor space is an allotment there are a few things you may wish to consider first.

Firstly, be sure you are committed, as chickens require a certain amount of responsibility and will definitely need someone to take care of them if you go on holiday. If you do not invest in an automatic door then you will need to come up to site every morning and evening to let them out and shut them in.

When keeping hens on an allotment, security is probably the single most important factor to consider. They will need somewhere to safely sleep at night and a fenced off space to roam in the day. The more space you have the better, but a minimum of 1m² of outside space per full sized bird is recommended. Make sure the run is well protected with 2m high chicken wire fencing (If open topped), with an outward facing overhang and fencing laid on the ground to prevent foxes digging under. Many runs come with 'Fox Skirts' which can be further added to with laying slabs around the edge.

*A note on foxes, they are clever. You may think your hens are safe and there are none on site as you have seen no activity around your run, but they are very adept at waiting for the right opportunity before making their move. The best course of action is to act as though they are there.



The hens sleeping area needs to be warm, dry and well-ventilated, but also not too hot in the summer. Some companies such as Omlet sell coops that are double skinned to try and help with temperature control. Consideration should also be given to potential parasites in particular red mites who thrive in wooden coops where they can hide more easily during the day and come out at night to suck on your hen's

blood. They can still infest plastic coops, but they are much easier to keep clean and treat. Hens like to roost at night so either raised perches or a gridded floor will work. They also need a nest box area where they can lay their eggs. Potential beddings for your coop includes chopped straw, first grade shavings or hemp.



Feed troughs and a water drinker need to be robust; to withstand rodent attack and frosts.

You will need to bring fresh water with you to the site to top up drinkers. Water from water butts and the troughs onsite may not be fresh, and pose a potential health risk as it could be contaminated with infected bird waste. A clean 'Jerry' can is a good option to transport water.

There are a variety of types of feed on the market and it will be a case of trial and error to find what your hens will eat. Young birds will be fed on either a chick crumb or growers pellet/mash depending on their age, this contains higher protein levels to aid in growth. When they get to laying age, they can be switched onto Layers Pellets or Mash, which contains more calcium to help with egg production. You can give hens the occasional treat of fruit and vegetables which helps to produce rich tasting eggs, but you are not allowed to feed hens kitchen scraps in the UK, unless you operate a totally vegan household. Supplements are also a good idea to give your birds a boost during moulting. Dried mealworms unless produced in the UK can also not be fed to hens due to the potential for them having been fed on unknown proteins which can spread disease.

When choosing your feeder, consider if you are able and willing to remove it each evening to be replaced in the morning. Not doing so will encourage rodents. There are rodent proof options on the market such as those that require the hens to stand on a peddle to open the feeder, these are known as Grandpa or Treadle feeders. They can usually be adjusted to suit the weight of your birds. To get them used to standing on the peddle you will need to weigh it down for the first few days so that they can learn where the food is. There are also designs that can be suspended so that when a rodent climbs up the weight of it shuts the door to the food.



Regular checks to clean out, top up food and water and look for any predator incursions are essential. Remove any droppings from the hen house daily if you can and clean out weekly; the droppings are ideal for the compost heap. If you can conduct poo picks in your run also, it will help keep down fly numbers.

Take time getting to know your hens and give them regular health. Check feet for bumblefoot, scaly leg mites, droppings for evidence of worms. Combs and wattles for damage particularly in winter as hens with large ones can be more susceptible to frostbite.



BumbleFoot



Frostbite



Scaly Leg Mite

Doing some research on potential illnesses and remedies/preventions will help you create a 'chicken first aid kit'.

Assuming all is well and you are using a good quality feed you can expect to collect around 3-5 eggs a week from each hen depending on the type. Hybrid birds have been specifically bred to increase egg production, so will be more prolific layers. This comes at a trade off for life expectancy with them living for around 6 years as opposed to 8-10 years for Pure Bred/Heritage breeds and Bantams. Most hens will start laying at around 18 weeks of age and will reach peak production in their first year, after that the number they lay will begin to tail off, with them eventually stopping laying.

We recommend that if you are buying your birds, that you get ones at POL (Point of Lay) or as sexed chicks from a reputable breeder which will both vaccinate and worm them. This is not only to prevent the spread of diseases but also to ensure that you do not inadvertently get a cockerel. Another option is to adopt ex battery hens.

Once you've made this investment your hens will blossom into mischievous girls bringing you endless hours of entertainment. If you're having a stressful day, take some time to sit in your allotment and watch your birds rootle for bugs, sunbathe and dust bathe, you'll be surprised at just how entertaining they can be! You will also soon get to learn that chickens have individual and endearing personalities, children love them, and their characters can be priceless.

As Bird flu has now become a constant threat in the UK any members keeping hens must adhere to the latest government guidelines regarding disease prevention.

3. Number of Livestock per plot

Based on the space required to keep livestock happy and healthy the following numbers are given as a guide to ideal numbers per plot. For all livestock a minimum number of 2 is also recommended due to their social nature.

Plot Size	Chickens or (Bantams)*
50m ²	4 (6)
100m ²	6 (8)
150m ²	8 (10)

*When mixing Chickens and Bantams remember that some breeds of Bantam are prone to being bullied by larger hens you may have to set up two separate coops and runs.

4. Animal welfare

All tenants keeping livestock onsite need to provide the committee with an up-to-date contact number in case of emergencies. If the committee are not able to reach you on this number, and the animal is in need of urgent medical care the committee reserve the right to take them to the nearest appropriate veterinary centre.

All livestock is subject to strict welfare codes enforced by the RSPCA and DEFRA and covered by the Animal Welfare Act 2006. Under the Act it is a criminal offence to cause unnecessary suffering to an animal. The Act states that all animals have basic needs that must be fulfilled by their owner or keeper.

- For a suitable environment (place to live).
- For a suitable diet.
- To exhibit normal behaviour patterns.
- To be housed with, or apart from, other animals (if applicable).
- To be protected from pain, injury, suffering and disease.

The allotment tenant will be held responsible for ensuring the above standards are met. If any animal on an allotment is deemed a nuisance, health hazard or their well-being is affected, then the committee will in the first instance contact the owner of the animals. If issues persist after this contact the committee have the right to involve outside agencies such as the RSPCA.

5. Housing Structure Rules

Any housing must be sited at least 50cm (20 inches) from any adjacent shared path or another plot. It must also have a maximum height of 2.5m (8ft 2in) due to planning laws. The structure should be kept away from the starting point for the plot's shed so one could be erected at a later date should one be required. The housing itself must be commercially available, not manufactured ad-hoc (for example using wooden pallets, corrugated iron or glass panes or panels). Homemade runs constructed of wood and metal 'chicken wire' are allowed as long as they do not exceed 1m in height.

6. Rodent prevention

Please ensure that all feed is kept in rodent proof storage, and none is left accessible to vermin overnight. Try to clear up excess spilt food and dispose of it each evening and remove or purchase rodent proof feeders if they are kept in runs overnight. Remember rodents will climb, gnaw, and squeeze their way into almost any space.

Secure housing against rodent access so that they cannot get into your livestock's sleeping areas when they are shut in. Regularly check for evidence of rodent damage and repair accordingly.

For advice on how to control rodents please read our Pest Control Policy.

7. Predator Prevention

The site is visited and accessible to various predators such as but not limited to foxes, badgers, cats and buzzards. Please bear this in mind when purchasing/setting up your livestock accommodation.

The installation of fox skirts and paving around runs is encouraged as is the use of fully enclosed runs to prevent access from birds of prey. Bear in mind that hens like to dig and scratch the ground, therefore placing wire on the ground inside their runs can cause injury to their feet and prevent natural behaviours.

Appendix – Useful links

www.vetanimalhouse.co.uk – Animal House Rugby has a chicken friendly vet

www.gov.uk/government/news/bird-flu - The latest UK bird flu status on the DEFA website

www.meadowviewchickens.co.uk – Meadowview Chickens near Hinckley sell both birds and Chicken supplies

<https://freshstartforhens.co.uk/> - Fresh start for Hens rehome ex battery chickens

<https://www.pipinchicksilkies.com/buying-guide/> - PipinChick Silkies are based in Bristol and have lots of useful information about the different chicken breeds including a compatibility guide.

<https://www.newcottagepoultry.com/> - New Cottage Poultry near Ashby-de-la-Zouch sell birds and a small amount of chicken supplies

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Chicken-Chicks-Guide-Backyard-Chickens> - The Chicken Chick's Guide to Backyard Chickens by Kathy Shea Mormino is a handy book into how to keep your hens happy and healthy

There are also many Facebook Groups dedicated to the keeping and care of chickens.



EPAA Livestock Policy

Version 1

Adopted 2023

THIS AGREEMENT is made on the		(date)
BETWEEN EDEN PARK ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION ("The Association")		
And		
		(Full name of Tenant/s)
On Plot Number		
Contact number		

The Plot holder agrees to follow the guidelines covered in the EPAA Livestock Policy **Version 1** and that all tenants keeping livestock onsite need to provide the committee with an up-to-date contact number in case of emergencies. If the committee are not able to reach you on this number, and the animal is in need of urgent medical care you consent to the committee reserving the right to take them to the nearest appropriate veterinary centre.

Executed by the Association by signing by two members of the committee:	
Date:	Date:
Signed by the Tenant/s:	
Date:	Date:

The above information provided by Tenants may be held on a database and processed in accordance with the provisions of the GDPR regulations administrative and statistical purposes. Eden Park Allotment Association will not disclose the information to third parties without prior written consent of the Tenant unless required to do so by any relevant authority.