



## HEREFORD ALLOTMENT AND LEISURE GARDENERS

### KEEPING CHICKENS ON THE ALLOTMENT

Anyone who wishes to keep chickens on their allotment should first speak with their Site Rep. Providing the Site Rep with full details of proposed housing for the chickens including dimensions. Although chickens can legally be kept on the allotment under The Allotment Act 1950, it is important that anyone wanting to keep them have spoken with their Site Rep first to ensure the Site Rep is satisfied the chickens housing and care needs will be met.

#### **Guidance:**

##### HOUSING:

Chickens require a coop which must be a safe dry space for the chickens to roost and contain nest boxes for them to lay eggs. Chickens don't like to roost on the floor so a perch should be provided. The coop should be ventilated but ensure not draughty. The coop should be cleaned and sanitised regularly and suitable litter material on the floor and nest boxes such as wood shavings. Hay must not be used for bedding as it soon gets damp and can cause fungal spores to grow that can cause aspergillosis.

The chickens require an outdoor run. This must be predator proof and provide the chickens with enough space to roam around and be chickens! 'Chicken Wire' is not suitable wire for a chicken run, it is not predator proof. Wire mesh used should be at least 19 gauge, the lower the number the thicker the mesh and the thicker the better to help prevent predators such as foxes gaining access. The run must ensure thermal comfort for the chickens so shade from the sun and protection from harsh weather such as wind and rain. The run should have a suitable roof to ensure the chickens are not roaming in boggy, wet conditions. Slabs or other suitable material should be used to prevent predators and / or rodents from digging into the chicken housing. The run should have suitable flooring (litter). Woodchip is ideal but not bark as this can harbor spores which can be dangerous to chickens.

The plot holder should ensure they do everything reasonably practicable to prevent rodents. The plot holder not HALGS is responsible for rodent control where chickens are kept. Things that can help 1) keep housing clean and sanitised 2) store food in metal bins or area where rodents cannot easily access 3) ensure suitable flooring to chicken housing to make it difficult for rodents to access 4) don't overfeed your chickens, leaving too much surplus food hanging around. Should the plot holder suspect rodent activity they must report this but any treatment required will be charged to the plot holder.

## GENERAL HEN HUSBANDRY

Chickens require daytime access to a suitable feed such as layers meal or pellets and fresh drinking water. Feed should be provided in a suitable container not scattered on the floor.

Chickens love treats but treats should be given moderately such as corn and fresh greens. There are times when chickens may have additional dietary requirements. For example chickens may require additional protein in times of moult, sunflower hearts are an excellent source. Refer to DEFRA guidance on the do's and don'ts regarding feeding chickens.

Chickens should be wormed at least twice per year and checked regularly for mites, lice and general health conditions. Any issues identified must be acted upon appropriately without delay.

Chickens need to eat small stones in order to help digest their food. Chickens don't have teeth so swallow whatever they choose to eat whole. Any grit they eat is used to grind up food in their Gizzard. When keeping chickens it is important to give them a supply of grit as they may not be able to naturally find enough grit. Grit with oyster shells is even better as the oyster shells provide calcium which your chickens need to lay eggs with strong shells.

Chickens like to dust bath to clean themselves. If there is no area in the run with dry soil where they can dig their own dust bath then a dust bath can be provided. Suitable dust bath material can be a sieved mixture of wood ash, multipurpose compost and Diatomaceous Earth Powder to provide the perfect spa treatment for your hens.

## COMMITMENT

Keeping chickens is a great hobby and goes along with the ethos of being self sufficient. Eggs from the chickens are to be for plot holders own use and not business profit.

The plot holder must ensure the chickens are checked at least once per day. Must ensure compliance with Animal Welfare Act 2006 and DEFRA guidance.

### **FURTHER READING:**

DEFRA:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs>

BRITISH HEN WELFARE TRUST: <https://www.bhwt.org.uk/>

ANIMAL WELFARE ACT 2006: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/animal-welfare>

FRESH START FOR HENS: <https://freshstartforhens.co.uk/>