

## Sale of produce

Allotment legislation defines an allotment as a place which is "is wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of vegetable or fruit crops for consumption by himself or his family" and their use for trade or business is prohibited. It is permissible for plot-holders to sell surplus produce, which may include a genuine surplus of eggs; allotment authorities are more likely to be comfortable with this activity if the produce is donated to the allotment association and the money raised used for site development.

Other legislation states that if fewer than 50 birds are kept you are allowed to sell your eggs without grading or marking. However, for traceability, you do have to provide details of your name and address to your customers. You are also required to provide consumers, with advice to keep chilled after purchase and a 'best before date'. This date should be no more than 28 days from the date on which the egg was laid. Where eggs are sold to someone who will then sell them on, to a shop or restaurant you will need to register with the Egg Marketing Inspectorate.

If you do sell your eggs to fellow plot-holders or visitors to the site shop you will need to store the eggs correctly, protected from extremes in temperature and away from strong odours; it is inadvisable to wash eggs.

## Become a member of The National Allotment Society

Membership of The National Allotment Society comes with a raft of benefits, from discounts on horticultural products through to initial legal advice and horticultural expertise. To become a member visit [www.nsalg.org.uk](http://www.nsalg.org.uk) or call **01536 266576**.

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## Policies

The Society would advise landlords and associations who allow rabbit or hen-keeping on their sites to have a policy in place with guidelines for tenants that cover issues such as

- standard of care and housing
- disease control
- disposal of dead hens and rabbits
- emergency plans for flooding etc, along with contact details
- the minimum and maximum number of hens or rabbits allowed

Contact the Society on [natsoc@nsalg.org.uk](mailto:natsoc@nsalg.org.uk) if you would like further information, NAS members have access to sample documents.

## Further sources of support

British Hen Welfare Trust – [www.bhwt.org.uk/](http://www.bhwt.org.uk/)

[www.homecomposting.org.uk/hens-home](http://www.homecomposting.org.uk/hens-home)

[www.rspca.org.uk/home](http://www.rspca.org.uk/home)

[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) this website is a portal in to all government departments e.g. Defra and will link to your local council environmental health and trading standards departments.



## Keeping hens and rabbits on allotments



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. However please do check your tenancy agreement first, as in some circumstances your landlord may have included a clause relating to the keeping of animals.

When referring to hens, the law means the female of the species and excludes cockerels, which aren't needed for hens to lay eggs. A cockerel's morning chorus can cause a statutory noise nuisance, especially in urban areas, which the Local Authority (Environmental Health Department) is obliged to investigate under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Under this legislation the Environmental Health Department can serve an abatement notice to stop the noise; followed by fines if the noise continues.

By law, owners of 50 or more birds need to register with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). DEFRA also encourages owners to register voluntarily at [www.gov.uk/poultry-registration](http://www.gov.uk/poultry-registration) so that Defra can contact you quickly if there is an outbreak of disease such as 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.

## Animal welfare

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.

If any animal on an allotment is deemed a nuisance, health hazard or their well-being is affected then they can be removed, detailed guidance about care for a variety of animals can be found on [www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare](http://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare)

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.

For information about bees on allotments, please see our separate leaflet. The NAS do not recommend the keeping of other animals on an allotment plot and this may also be a breach of your Tenancy Agreement.

## Looking after rabbits

Rabbits are the third most popular pet in the UK, but like all animals they have complex needs. Rabbits can live to between 8 and 12 years and are highly social animals, but unfortunately they make a good meal for any fox. They should be housed in hutches that allow them to stand on their hind legs, with access to a secure outdoor space where they can get regular exercise; but make sure that the rabbits can't dig their way out or predators their way in. Rabbits will need to be checked daily and supplied with fresh drinking water and food. More detailed guidance for rabbit care can be found on the RSPCA website; [www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/pets/rabbits](http://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/pets/rabbits)

*'...chickens have individual and endearing personalities, children love them and their characters can be priceless...'*

## 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. The British Hen Welfare Trust, who have re-homed over 400,000 ex-commercial hens to the growing number of people who have discovered the joys and benefits of keeping hens, have very kindly provided the following chicken keeping advice.

Firstly check your local council rules on keeping hens on allotments as some vary regionally. Then 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.

You will soon get to learn that chickens have individual and endearing personalities, children love them and their characters can be priceless.

When keeping the girls on your allotment security is the single most important factor to consider; if you don't protect the hens from predators all other considerations will be worthless. Somewhere for the girls to safely sleep at night and space for them to roam in the day is the ideal. The more space you have the better – consider a small mobile unit to put on your veg beds so the hens can clear the ground of slugs, bugs and weeds, scarifying the ground as they go! A warm, dry, well ventilated coop or converted shed with attached run or fenced off ranging is perfect. A minimum of 1m<sup>2</sup> of outside space per bird is recommended.

Make sure the run is well protected with two metre high chicken wire fencing, with an outward facing flange of fencing laid on the ground to prevent



Credited to Holly Raper.

foxes digging under. Remember bedding for the hen house floor, chopped straw or first grade shavings are ideal and make cleaning a doddle. They also need feed troughs and a water drinker; there are plenty to choose from. Be sure to select something robust and ensure the feeder can be taken in at night to avoid any infiltration from rodents. You'll need buckets to carry feed, a watering can to supply water and of course a basket to collect the eggs! The occasional treat is nice and if you want rich tasting eggs buy a good quality feed, such as the Smallholder Range and enjoy watching them relish each morsel.

Daily checks to clean out, top up food and water and check generally 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. Give your birds a regular health check. Getting to know your hens is the best way to ensure you care for them well and handling your girls regularly from the start means they will get used to you. Doing some research will help you discover more on worming and treating for parasites.

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. In total you'd be outlaying around £5-6 weekly for a flock of 4 hens, not too much when you consider the return.

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!

Remember if your allotment is not close to your home you will need to visit your coop at dawn and dusk to let your hens in and out. Automated door closures are also an option to consider.

Feed stored at your allotment should be kept in vermin proof bins you will not be popular with your allotment neighbours if you encourage rats.

And finally – hens really are almost no trouble and an asset to any smallholding or allotment just so long as you follow this advice and do your research. To find out more information visit [www.bhwt.org.uk](http://www.bhwt.org.uk)