

GINHALL LANE ALLOTMENTS

KEEPING CHICKENS ON ALLOTMENT SITE

CODE OF PRACTICE

The keeping of chickens can be a welcome addition to an allotment garden, providing an enjoyable and enriching experience. It is essential that the tenant discusses any proposal to keep chickens with the landlord (Town Council). The tenant must also demonstrate appropriate knowledge, necessary skills and sign a Contractual Agreement.

The tenant must carefully consider the implications of keeping chickens through research into their wellbeing and welfare needs. The library has many books on the subject, and websites such as R.S.P.C.A www.rspca.org.uk/allaboutanimals/pets/faranimals/chickens; British Hen Welfare Trust www.bhwt.org.uk/ DEFRA www.defra.gov.uk (helpline – tel: 08459 335577) also provide help and information.

The tenant is required to familiarise themselves and comply with relevant laws. Allotment Law states that tenants may keep chickens on their allotment garden (Section 12 Allotments Act 1950, 26th October) subject to written consent of the Council. Another important law to be considered is the Animal Welfare Act 2006 which came into force on the 6th April 2007 – “Not only is it against the law to be cruel to an animal, you must ensure that all the animal’s welfare needs are met”. There is a copy of the explanatory notes which refer to the 2006 Animal Welfare Act at the Town Council Office, in the Information Folder in the Community Shed at the Allotment Site, or you can use the DEFRA website to view them.

The tenant will be allowed to keep up to 5 hens and must observe that cockerels are not permitted. Hens may not be bred from and no commerce shall be involved in egg production. Records of welfare will be maintained and must be available to the Allotment Manager at any time. The tenant will permit the Allotment Manager or deputy, and if applicable, any animal welfare representative which the Town Council may call upon to inspect the hens and their environs at any time.

In the absence of the tenant, e.g. through holiday or illness, the name of a temporary carer will be given to the Town Council.

HOUSING OF HENS

The tenant must provide a fully enclosed and well ventilated hen house and run which will afford year round shelter from adverse weather conditions, including shade from the sun.

Plans for the proposed hen house must be submitted to the Town Council for approval.

The structure should be constructed using small mesh wire to exclude wild birds, and be at a height to allow the tenant to walk in to check and feed the hens.

Each hen will have:

- A minimum of 0.25 square metres of floor space;
- A nesting box (2 for 5 hens), enclosed and draught free, filled with straw/hay/wood shavings;
- A perch for roosting at night. The dimensions will depend on the size of the hens, e.g. bantams 5cms wide and 3cms thick, whereas large hens will need 8cm wide and 5cm thick perches. Perches will be rounded (like a broom handle).

Hens will have daytime access to open air, i.e. 8 hours of daylight each day.

There will be regular maintenance of the hen house and run, checking that it is in a safe and secure state, escape and predator proof.

FOOD AND WATER

*Flint grit is essential in enabling hens to digest food and also contains calcium.

*Hens will be given pellets or mash and provided with green stuffs for minerals and calcium to meet with the individual needs of their breed.

*It is recommended by many keepers that cereal grain be given with feed in the later afternoon or early evening as it remains in the crop for longer and keeps the hens feeling warm and full during the night.

*The tenant will ensure fresh water is always available. Particular attention is required during winter months when drinking water may freeze.

*The tenant must deliver fresh water to the hens when allotment water is turned off (October to April).

*Under normal weather conditions each hen requires 300mls of fresh water per day.

*The tenant will keep feed and water free from contamination by wild birds and animals.

HEALTH AND HYGIENE

*The tenant will visit twice daily to check feed, water and general condition of hens. If working or absent then the tenant must delegate these tasks to a responsible person.

*It must be recognised that hens appreciate a routine such as being let out of their house into the run and being fed at regular times.

*Hens require regular worming, clipping of claws and checking for lice and red mites.

*Feed is to be stored securely in a metal bin so that the quality of feed is maintained and vermin is deterred.

*Food dispensers must be cleaned regularly in order to prevent disease.

*The water tanks on the allotment site must not be used to wash any equipment employed in the care of hens.

*The tenant may take water to the hen house in order to clean equipment and then dispose of used water on their allotment garden.

*The tenant must contact a vet if a hen is sick.

*When a hen dies, the tenant must remove the carcass from the site as soon as possible, determine the cause of death and inform the Council.

Failure to comply with the above criteria will result in confiscation of the hens, loss of tenancy and possible prosecution.

I (Print_____ have read and understood the Code of Practice, and will comply with the terms stated within it.

SIGNATURE_____ PLOT NO._____ DATE_____

WITNESS (Print)_____ DATE_____

WRITTEN BY LEOMINSTER ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION ON BEHALF OF LEOMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL - 2015