



## **Policy on the Keeping of Chickens and Rabbits on Allotments**

Rye Amenity CIC is keen to encourage allotment tenants to make the most of their allotment plot. Keeping hens and/or rabbits is one way in which tenants may wish to use part of their allotment plot. However, you must not keep animals on your allotment unless you are prepared to look after their welfare needs. This means having both the time and the know-how to look after them properly.

This policy has been developed by Rye Amenity CIC in accordance with the “Welfare of animals kept on allotments: briefing on the key issues from the Public Affairs team” document, published by the RSPCA.

### **Before you start**

If you have never kept hens or rabbits before it is important that you learn how to keep them properly. There is plenty of information available on the internet. Also, there are a number of courses available if required.

You must also look at how much keeping your chosen animal(s) will cost. There will be the cost of buying your animals and a house and run to keep them in. Then they must have proper food, bedding, feeders and drinkers. You will need to buy disinfectant suitable for keeping your animal housing clean and products for preventing and controlling parasites. If your animal is ill you may have vets fees to pay as well.

It is not an excuse under animal welfare law to say that you cannot afford to look after your animals properly.

You should think very hard about whether you have the skills, finances and knowledge to keep animals on your allotment before proceeding to do so.

### **Do I have time?**

If you want to keep animals on your allotment you will need to be absolutely sure that you can visit them at least once every day. This includes weekends and bank holidays all through the year. Twice a day is better for hens and rabbits so that you can ensure that they are shut in at night to keep them safe from foxes and other potential predators, as well as let them out when you feed them in the morning. If the weather is very hot or very cold you must be prepared to visit more than once a day to check that your animals have access to water. Frozen water is the same as having no water at all.

If you go away on holiday then you must arrange for someone else to visit your animals every day and look after them on your behalf.

Keeping livestock is a big commitment and you must not start doing it if you do not think you can stick to it.

### **Can I keep anything else?**

Rye Amenity CIC will consider applications for the keeping of bees. The process for applying to keep bees is contained within the Allotment Rules.

Permission will not be granted for the keeping of any other animals on the allotments. As stated in the Allotment Rules, cockerels are not permitted to be kept on the allotments.

The animals you keep on your plot must always be kept for your own use and not for any business or profit.

### **Emergency contact information**

If you decide that you want to keep hens and/or rabbits on your plot, you must fill in an emergency contact form before you bring any animals onto your plot. An emergency contact form can be obtained by emailing us at: [ryeamenitycic@gmail.com](mailto:ryeamenitycic@gmail.com)

You are responsible in law for looking after the needs of your animals. It is a good idea to give emergency contact details to the plot holders next to you so that they can let you know straight away if they notice any problems with your animals.

If we contact you to tell you your animals are at risk of danger or have escaped, we will expect you to act quickly to sort things out.

We are aware that telephone numbers change but it is your responsibility to keep the contact details you provide us with up to date. If we cannot contact you in an emergency because you have not told us about changes to your emergency contact details, we will ask

you to remove your animals from the allotment. Also, if we cannot contact you and your animal(s) needs urgent veterinary treatment, we reserve the right to obtain treatment and pass the cost of the treatment to you for payment.

You will also need to tell us how many of each kind of animal you will be keeping on the emergency contact form and tell us promptly about any changes to those numbers.

### **What allotment law says about keeping hens and rabbits**

Although the Allotment Act 1950 allows plot holders to keep hens and rabbits, it also says that they must not be kept in a way that makes them “prejudicial (harmful) to health or a nuisance”. This means anything you do – or don’t do – that makes it likely that your animals will spread disease to other animals or people or where they cause a problem of smell, noise or damage etc. If we feel there is a problem with the way you keep your animals we can come onto your plot at any time to investigate. If you do not put things right after we have asked you to, then we will write to you and ask you to remove your animals from the allotment site.

### **Allotments and the Animal Welfare Act 2006**

Under section 9 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006, a person responsible for any vertebrate animal must take all reasonable steps to ensure they meet all of its welfare needs to the extent required by good practice. This includes, but is not limited to:

- The need for a suitable diet;
- The need for a suitable environment;
- The need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns;
- The need to be housed with, or apart from other animals, as required; and
- The need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

Anyone who is cruel to an animal, or does not look after its welfare needs, may be banned from owning animals, fined up to £20000 and/or sent to prison. If we have good reason to believe that you have failed to meet the needs of animals kept on your allotment, we may take steps to end your tenancy.

## **Planning for fire and flood**

Plot holders who keep animals should make a plan for what they will do to prevent/deal with:

### Fire

All materials that can catch light easily, like straw, hay, waste bedding, empty bags, etc. must be stored well away from where animals are kept. A way of controlling any small fire – a bucket of water or dry sand – should be kept close to the run. The water should be kept topped up and covered to prevent water loss, the sand should be covered to keep it dry.

### Flood

Some allotment sites or plots can be affected by flooding. You should have a safe place in mind to move your animals to if your plot is affected.

## **Outbreak of disease**

From time to time there can be outbreaks of animal diseases that affect a particular area or the whole country. Some diseases can be quickly passed on by contact and through the air. If you keep hens, even one or two, we require you to register with the Great Britain Poultry Register. Then, if there is an outbreak of disease, you will be contacted to tell you about it and be given advice on how to deal with it quickly. Further information about the registering poultry can be obtained from the following website: [www.gov.uk/guidance/poultry-registration](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/poultry-registration)

## **When your tenancy ends**

When your tenancy with us ends (and however it ends) you must remove any animal housing that you have used on your plot while you have been a tenant. This is to reduce the risk of disease being passed on. If buildings/runs are not removed by the tenant, we reserve the right to have them removed and to recharge you for the costs of doing so.

Rye Amenity CIC, January 2018

*This policy was adopted by Rye Amenity CIC on 28 January 2018 and is subject to periodic review.*