

# Battle Town Council

## POLICY FOR KEEPING HENS ON ALLOTMENT PLOTS

**Allotments Act 1950** An Act to amend the law relating to allotments and to abolish restrictions on the keeping of hens and rabbits.

*Notwithstanding any provision to the contrary in any lease or tenancy or in any covenant, contract or undertaking relating to the use to be made of any land, it shall be lawful for the occupier of any land to keep, otherwise than by way of trade or business, hens or rabbits in any place on the land and to erect or place and maintain such buildings or structures on the land as reasonably necessary for that purpose:*

*Provided that nothing in this subsection shall authorise any hens or rabbits to be kept in such a place or in such a manner as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance or affect the operation of any enactment.*

Allotment holders should comply with the standards of care laid out in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) codes of practice.

### 1. Consent

Hens shall not be kept on any allotment plot unless the plot holder has submitted a written notification to and has received acknowledgement from, the Council.

Hens may only be kept on allotment plots around the perimeter of sites to reduce the access of vermin to that site. (Any plot holder already granted permission to keep hens on an inside plot will have the permission rescinded once the hens have died. Meanwhile, no replacement hens will be allowed. Henceforward the plot holder must move to an outside plot.)

The hen house and pasture area must be set up before hens are taken to the allotment site. The Council strongly recommends that the hen house is raised above the ground to avoid the possibility of rats digging underneath to steal eggs or eat the hen food.

Allotment holders who keep hens must commit to visiting their animals in the morning and evening to attend to their needs. (Suitable arrangements will need to be made to care for the birds if the owner is unable to visit them.)

### 2. Health and welfare of hens

Hens must have continuous access to well ventilated shelter, including a dry lying or roosting area large enough to allow all the hens to roost together at the same time. Each hen must have a minimum of 1 m<sup>2</sup> of space.

Owners must ensure that there is plenty of space for the hens to move around easily and perform their natural behaviours. Raised perches outside should be considered, to provide hens with a place to preen and perch away from other birds during the day.

Hens must have access to food and water throughout the day. All food should be cleared up and removed at night and replaced in the morning because rats feed at night, but roosting hens will not.

Food must be stored in metal containers.

Fences must be maintained to ensure that the hens cannot escape or become trapped or injured and also to provide appropriate protection against other animals including rats.

The Council recommends that hen owners register their bird(s) with the Great Britain Poultry Register in case of disease alerts.

### **3. Duty of care**

Hen owners have a duty of care to other allotment gardeners on the site, and to all members of the public living and gardening in properties nearby.

Hen owners are responsible for the control of vermin on their allotment plot. They must keep enough rat bait boxes to prevent any build up of rats on the site.

Rat urine often carries a bacterial leptospira disease called Weil's Disease and other diseases. It is recommended that allotment holders wear gloves if there is a possibility that soil or compost may be contaminated with rat urine.

### **4. Stand-by arrangements**

The hen owner must provide their contact details (name, address, telephone number) and details of their veterinary surgeon to the Council for use in case of emergencies. Details of a second contact should also be supplied in case the owner is absent or unavailable.

Hen owners are encouraged to provide contact details to neighbouring allotment holders who can alert them in case of an emergency.

An emergency contact telephone number should be displayed prominently at the allotment plot for use by the emergency services or RSPCA.

### **5. Complaints and withdrawal of consent**

The Council may issue a notice requiring the removal of the hens within 14 days if:

- The hen owner contravenes any of the conditions stated in this policy;
- A complaint that the keeping of hens has caused nuisance or danger to other plot holders or members of the public is upheld; or
- Substantive information is received that requires a review of the arrangements.

To Battle Town Council

I hereby accept and agree to abide by the additional conditions of tenancy laid down by Battle Town Council in their policy for keeping hens on allotment plots.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Allotment and plot number: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_