

South Creake Parish Council Allotment Policy for Animals

January 2025

1. Introduction

This policy is for any Tenant who holds an Allotment Tenancy Agreement at either of the Allotment sites in South Creake. It will also be used by Councillors when considering applications to keep animals on allotments. **NOTE ONLY CHICKENS ARE ALLOWED AND MUST BE REGISTERED WITH DEFRA**

The policy is for Tenants applying for written permission to erect housing and runs to keep chickens on the allotment as per the Allotment Tenancy Agreement.

2. Before applying

2.1 The Tenant must be confident and know how to care for the animals they wish to have on their allotment plot.

2.2 Animal Welfare Act 2006

The Tenant is responsible in law for looking after the needs of their animals. The Tenant must take all reasonable steps to make sure that their animals have:

- A suitable environment (place to live).
- A suitable diet.
- The chance to show normal patterns of behaviour.
- A place to live with, or apart from, animals of their own kind (as needed).
- Protection from pain, injury, suffering and disease.

Anyone who is cruel to an animal, neglects it, or does not look after its welfare needs, may be banned from owning animals, fined up to £20,000 and / or sent to prison. If the Council have good reason to believe that a Tenant has failed to meet the needs of animals kept on their allotment the council will take steps to end the tenancy and may report the Tenant to the RSPCA.

2.3 The Tenant must be certain they have the time to care for the animals, visiting them at least once a day, every day.

2.4 The Tenant must ensure they have the required space on the allotment garden. Only 25% of the allotment garden can be used for animal housing and or runs, sheds, or patio area. The remaining 75% is for cultivation.

2.5 The Tenant must be aware that by applying they will also be accepting partial cost of the Rodent controllers fees. Rodent Controller for the allotments will be organised by the Parish Council and the costs will be divided proportionally to each Tenant.

3. How to apply

When the Tenant has considered the above points and is confident that they meet the criteria and wish to apply for permissions, the following steps should be followed.

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3.1 Contact the Parish Clerk either by telephone or email to request a permission form. In the future forms will be on the Parish Council website.

3.2 Once the Tenant has read and is confident that they can adhere to this policy, the Tenant must complete the application form, providing as much detail as possible, sign the form and return to the Parish Clerk. The Tenant must not purchase any animal and / or erect any housing until a member of the Allotment Sub Group and where necessary the Parish Council has contacted them regarding the request and granted the required permission.

3.3 The Allotment Officer may contact the Tenant to gather more information, if required, and / or arrange a visit to the allotment garden to ascertain if the Tenant has the required space and knowledge to keep the animals.

4. Decision

The Allotment Officer will aim to either 'grant' or 'decline' the animal permission request, by letter or email, within 15 working days of receipt of a valid application.

5. After written permission is given

The Tenant must:

5.1 Ensure that three quarters (75%) of the plot (s) is used for cultivation.

5.2 Not allow the animals to cause a nuisance to other Tenants or nearby residents.

5.3 Keep the animal housing clean and in a good state of repair.

5.4 Not use animal waste (except a small amount for compost) as allotment garden fertiliser. Excess waste is to be disposed of safely, legally, and off site.

5.5 Keep to the Parish Council's Allotment Tenancy Agreement and policies relating to the keeping of animals on allotments, as well as all relevant legislation.

5.6 Not carry out any trade or business on the allotment site.

5.7 Allow animal housing to be inspected from time to time by a Council employee. Any concerns that are raised during an inspection must be rectified in good time.

5.8 Any written permission granted to keep animals is not transferable. It will automatically come to an end with the Allotment Tenancy Agreement.

5.9 The Tenant must remove any animal housing and reinstate the plot to its original condition at the end of the Allotment Tenancy Agreement.

5.10 Return the allotment garden in its original condition, if not the Council will carry out work and recover the costs from the Tenant.

5.11 Be expected to comply with the policy; however, negotiations, timescales and individual circumstances will be taken into consideration.

6. Waste Management

6.1 Animals on Allotments are known to attract vermin. To minimise this Tenants must adhere to the following: –

- Keep the minimum amount of fresh / other feed on the allotment.

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- Keep the minimum amount of bedding, straw, wood shavings, saw dust etc on the allotment.
- Remove all soiled / used bedding and other materials from the allotment. No accumulation of any matter that may attract or give harbourage to vermin or be prejudicial to health or a nuisance may be kept on an allotment.

Schedule 1 – Keeping Chickens on Allotments

7. Introduction

The maximum number of chickens the Tenant can apply for is six (6). The following paragraphs are the RSPCA Guidelines on keeping chickens.

7.1 Food and Water

- Chickens must always have access to clean and fresh water. In cold weather, care should be taken to prevent drinking water from icing-up. Ice should be broken manually; chemicals should never be used.
- Drinkers should be cleaned regularly, and water should not be allowed to remain in a contaminated or stale condition.
- Drinkers that prevent young chicks climbing in and drowning should be used. As the birds become older and require more water, alternative drinkers can be introduced, and those drinkers used previously should be removed gradually over 7 days.
- If new chickens are introduced to the allotment garden, they must be provided with facilities to which they are already accustomed, as chickens do not like to drink from unfamiliar drinkers.
- Chickens spend much of their day scratching and foraging for small seeds, roots, and insects. However, they will need additional food, which is suitable for their age and breed, to provide a balanced diet. If feed is provided outside, it should be sheltered to keep it clean and dry. Feed dispensers should be cleaned regularly, and precautions taken to prevent infestation and contamination of the feed. Avoid attracting rodents and wild birds by cleaning up any spilt feed.
- Chickens should always have access to insoluble grit (e.g., hard flint grit) to aid digestion. If the birds are kept on a grassed area, the grass should not be allowed to become too long, as, if eaten, long strands can become impacted in the crop, making it difficult for the birds to digest food.

7.2 Laying

As female birds mature, they will begin to lay eggs and a layers' mash, or pellet feed should be provided to ensure a balanced diet. Calcium supplements, such as oyster shell, can also be included in the diet. Chickens will naturally prefer to find a quiet, secluded place to lay their eggs. Therefore, chickens should be provided with individual, enclosed nest boxes. The boxes should be draught-free and lined with plenty of clean, dry and comfortable nesting material, such as straw or wood shavings.

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7.3 Housing

- Chickens should be provided with warm, dry, and well-ventilated housing. Adequate ventilation is very important, and while it is important to keep the birds warm, there must also be good air circulation inside the housing. The floor should be covered with a suitable flooring, such as wood shavings or straw, which must be kept dry and friable and therefore topped-up or replaced when necessary. Chickens like to dust-bathe and preen their feathers, therefore a suitable material, such as wood shavings, should also be supplied for this activity. Feed and water facilities should be provided within the house.
- Chickens will appreciate as much space as you can give them so they can forage for food. The absolute minimum space for a hen in a run is 1m² per hen. However, 2m² (21.53sq ft) per chicken is preferable, therefore if you apply for the maximum number of six (6) chickens you will need 12m², (129.18sq ft). Essentially the more space you have for chickens the better as the less space your flock has the more likely it is for there to be quarrels, and bullying. If they have more space any chickens being bullied can escape and are far less likely to be cornered. Chickens should also be provided with a hen house / coup contained within the run to allow them to be shut away at night to be safe from predators. The recommended space per hen / chicken is 0.18m² (2sq ft), therefore for six (6) chickens require 1.1m² coup space (12sq ft). The coup must be raised so they are at least 20.3cm (8in) to prevent access to vermin.
- Chickens will naturally seek a raised position to roost at dusk, which is an anti-predator behaviour, and should therefore be provided with perching facilities. Perches should be wooden and approximately 3 – 5cm in width with rounded edges, to enable the birds to grip them properly.
- Chickens require enough perching space for all the chickens to roost at the same time. However, there must be enough space either side of the perch for chickens to get up and down from them without injuring themselves. As a guide, chickens may require about 15cm of perching space each, but this will depend on the size of the birds. The height of the perches will have to be adjusted according to the age, size and breed of birds being kept.
- In smaller houses, a greater proportion of birds tend to go out onto the range area during the day and only use the housing at night. The entrance to the housing should be wide enough to allow chickens to pass through without difficulty and high enough so that they do not have to crouch down. The accommodation should be cleaned out frequently and disinfected to ensure that there are no harmful parasites that could compromise the birds' health.
- Note The size and location of any chicken house / coup must be agreed and approved by the Council on animal welfare grounds and cultivation requirements as per Allotment Tenancy Agreement and Council Policy.

7.4 Pasture

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- The outdoor area will require careful management and should be given periods of rest, to allow the ground and grass to recover. It is important that the area is sufficiently large enough to be divided to allow the chickens to roam on good pasture every day while other parts are allowed to recover. Again, the birds should have plenty of space to move around easily and perform their natural behaviours.
- Overhead cover should be provided to provide the chickens with protection from the sun, bad weather and other animals. It will also help to encourage birds to utilise the full outside area. They should also have access to dry soil where they can dust-bathe and forage.
- Where outside conditions and / or the vegetation is poor or limited, consideration should be given to providing alternative areas for enrichment. The provision of straw will keep birds occupied and encourage them to carry out food searching behaviours. Raised perches on the range area should be considered, as they provide a way for individuals to escape from one another, and birds often use them as a place to preen during the day.

7.5 Fencing

Fences should be well maintained and provide appropriate protection against other animals. The design should ensure that the birds cannot escape or become trapped or injured.

7.6 Company

It is recommended that at least three chickens which get on well together are kept.

7.7 Introducing new stock to an existing flock

Mixing of chickens that are unfamiliar with each other should be done carefully. Avoid mixing breeds with substantially different body weights or individuals from the same breed of markedly different sizes as this may result in increased conflict and bullying of smaller birds.

7.8 Health

Signs of poor health may include a hunched posture, erect feathers, and a reluctance to move. Birds may also be found hiding, for example in corners and may tuck their head under their wing. Healthy birds appear alert and interested in their environment and look 'bright eyed' and well hydrated. Chickens can be susceptible to lice and red mites. Lice, which are 2-3mm in size, can be found all over the body with their eggs being deposited around the shaft of the feather. Red mites are smaller and are more likely to be found on the fixtures within the shed. However, where a more serious infestation exists, they may be seen on birds at the base of the feathers, particularly under the wing.

7.9 Worming

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Poultry need regular worming, particularly if they are kept on the same ground for a prolonged period (more than a month).

7.10 Feather Pecking

Feather pecking is where chickens peck and pull at the feathers, sometimes leading to more serious injuries and even cannibalism. More information can be found in the 'Laying hen feather cover advice guide' which can be downloaded from the RSPCA website.

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Livestock Application Form to be signed and returned to the Parish Council

Date:

Allotment site: Back Street/ Leicester Road (delete as appropriate)

Plot Number:(s)

Plot holder name:

Livestock type: Hens

Backup Keeper's Name:.....

Back up Keepers Telephone Number:.....

I understand that I am solely responsible for the livestock kept on my allotment plot(s). I agree to pay any costs incurred for the removal, relocation and disposal of the Livestock at the end of my Lease agreement. I agree to pay for any damages inflicted on other property or plots caused by my livestock.

All tenants are required to sign and return an application form agreeing to the conditional terms of tenancy consequently agreeing to provide all the above information, adhering to the terms and conditions and undertaking a probationary period of 12 months from the date below.

I wholly agree to comply with the above rules and regulations

Plot Holder Signature.....

Date.....