

Housing

Over the past year we have seen backyard chicken keeping getting more and more popular. Most of these new poultry keepers are looking at keeping two or three laying hens to give them fresh eggs. Housing is obviously an item which needs to be considered.

A good poultry house protects the birds from the weather,



predators, injury and theft. Poultry require a dry, draft free house with windows and/or doors which can be opened for ventilation when necessary. Huts should be built up off the ground to aid vermin control. Allowing an adequate level of space per bird (1/10—1/5 sq metre) also helps keep humidity level to a minimum. Always provide 15—25 cms of perch per bird and one nest box for every 4-5 hens lined with straw / shredded paper etc. Chickens need access to clean water and good quality feed (wheat, layers pellets etc)

Diseases

- Avian Influenza
- Newcastle Disease
- Salmonella

Rules and Regulations

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 applies to the welfare of any animal under the care of man. Unless you keep 250+ chickens there are no requirements to keep records or documentation. If you keep 50+ chickens you are required by law to register with Defra Animal Health on 0191 2295400.

Irrespective of how many chickens you keep and due to the threats of Avian Influenza could I ask you to register your details with our Animal Health Officer.

If you require any further information about poultry keeping, please contact the Environmental Health Unit.

Useful sites:

www.defra.gov.uk

www.poultryallotment.org.uk

Environmental Health Unit

P.O. Box 232

16 Church Road

Stockton-on-Tees

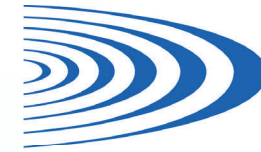
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Stockton-on-Tees
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Environmental Health Poultry Keeping



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Why Keep Chickens ?

Before deciding whether keeping chickens is for you, it is worthwhile considering the benefits of keeping chickens and the drawbacks.

The main reasons for small scale poultry keeping are:

Chickens as a Pet or Hobby

There is an attraction in keeping chickens as pets, with the benefits of some eggs as well. They may not be as trainable as a dog but they can be appealing creatures with their gentle clucking. Many people enjoy keeping fancy breeds, which they can show. Some of these are really spectacular in appearance with brightly coloured plumage.

Saving Money—The Economics

You can save money by keeping your own chickens for the eggs, but not a lot. What you can do is enjoy the benefits of keeping your own chickens and know it is not actually costing you anything to enjoy a superior product, your own eggs. The UK poultry industry, like most of the food industry, is extremely efficient and produces both eggs and table birds at extremely low cost to the consumer. When you take into account your labour costs you cannot make a convincing case for keeping chickens at home on economic grounds.

Better Poultry Welfare Standards

One compelling reason for keeping chickens is that their life will be better, living in a stress free environment in your garden. Even if we scrupulously buy “free range eggs” rather than battery eggs, from a supermarket, the welfare standards may well be below our expectations.



Nutritional Safety and Benefits

Eggs purchased from shops are generally of high quality and freshness, but most home keepers of chickens will tell you that their eggs are far superior. There is scientific evidence that free range eggs contain higher amounts of folic acid and Vitamin A and B12 than battery eggs. Free range does not mean organic, and commercial free range producers may well utilise feeding stuffs which contain additives.

Points to consider before getting chickens

- Some people are quite phobic about birds;
- Lack of suitable space—although you can keep chickens in a fairly small area;
- Local regulations—there are no byelaws in Stockton, but if you live in rented accommodation, please consult with your tenancy agreement and your landlord;
- Health concerns—Avian Influenza;
- Waste disposal—as with all animals, they can die, they also produce manure;
- Smell—unless you keep the housing and chicken area clean, there may be issues especially in warm weather;
- Noise—be aware of your neighbours, do not keep a cockerel, it is not necessary for a chicken to lay an egg;
- Vermin—keep all waste food off the ground and store in secure containers;
- If you are a keen gardener and want to keep free range chickens, your garden may not be the same again.