

# Keeping Animals on Allotment Policy

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**Document History**

Adopted by Council –  
Reviewed & Adopted – 12 December 2023  
Reviewed & Adopted –

## 1. Introduction

1.1 This policy is for any Tenant who holds an Allotment Tenancy Agreement at any of the Allotment sites in Gainsborough.

### ***Foxby Hill, Love Lane, North Warren, Showfield, and Spital Hill***

1.2 It will also be used by Councillors and Council employees when considering applications.

1.3 The policy is for Tenants applying for written permission to erect housing and runs for animals and to keep the following animals on the allotment, chickens, rabbits, bees and pigeons as per the Allotment Tenancy Agreement. Please note pigeons are only permitted on North Warren Allotment and no other allotment site.

1.4 Any permissions granted for chickens, rabbits, bees and pigeons are granted per Allotment Tenancy Agreement not per allotment garden, all animal housing at the point of surrender or termination of the Allotment Tenancy Agreement should be cleared from the allotment garden.

1.5 Any permissions granted are granted per Allotment Tenancy Agreement not per allotment garden i.e., the permission to keep animals and / or any animal related structure does not automatically transfer to another tenant. All animal housing at the point of surrender or termination of the Allotment Tenancy Agreement should be cleared from the allotment garden.

## 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 garden.

### 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 be confident they can afford to keep the animals.

- 2.5 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.

### **3. How to apply**

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 Contact the Allotment Officer at Gainsborough Town Council either by telephone or email to request a permission form.
- 3.3 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 and return to the Allotment Officer. The Tenant must not purchase any animal and / or erect any housing until the Allotment Officer has contacted them regarding the request and granted the required permission.
- 3.4 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**

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 If the permission is declined, the Tenant has the right to appeal the decision in writing, within 7 days of the permission being declined, with their reasoning for their appeal. The appeal will then be considered at a Property and Services Committee. The Allotment Officer will forward all correspondence to the Members of the Committee to allow them to make an informed decision as to either overturn the decision or to uphold with it. The Committee decision will be final.

### **5. After written permission is given**

The Tenant must:

- 5.1 Ensure that three quarters (75%) of the plot 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 Town 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: -

- (a) Keep the minimum amount of fresh / other feed on the allotment.
- (b) Keep the minimum amount of bedding, straw, wood shavings, saw dust etc on the allotment.
- (c) 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).

### 8. RSPCA Guidelines on keeping chickens.

#### 8.1 Food and Water

- (a) 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.
- (b) Drinkers should be cleaned regularly, and water should not be allowed to remain in a contaminated or stale condition.
- (c) 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.
- (d) 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.
- (e) 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.
- (f) 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.

#### 8.2 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.

#### 8.3 Housing

- (a) 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 dustbathe 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.
- (b) 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 1m<sup>2</sup> per hen. However, 2m<sup>2</sup>

(21.53sq ft) per chicken is preferable, therefore if you apply for the maximum number of six (6) chickens you will need 12m<sup>2</sup>, (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.

- (c) 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 recommend space per hen / chicken is 0.18m<sup>2</sup> (2sq ft), therefore for six (6) chickens require 1.1m<sup>2</sup> coup space (12sq ft). The coup must be raised so they are at least 20.3cm (8in) to prevent access to vermin.
- (d) 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.
- (e) 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.
- (f) 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.
- (g) Note The size and location of the 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.

#### **8.4 Pasture**

- (a) 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.
- (b) 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.
- (c) 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.

### **8.5 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.

### **8.6 Company**

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

### **8.7 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.

### **8.8 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.

### **8.9 Worming**

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

### **8.10 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.

## **Schedule 2 – Keeping Rabbits on Allotments**

### **9. Introduction**

The maximum number of rabbits the Tenant can apply for is two (2).

### **10. RSPCA Guidelines on keeping rabbits**

#### **10.1 Water**

Rabbits normally drink approximately 10ml water per 100g bodyweight per day. However, depending upon the type of diet they are fed, and in warmer weather, they will need to drink more water. In order to keep the water clean and to avoid spillage, bottle drinkers are suitable, although these must be checked regularly to ensure that there is no blockage, which would prevent the rabbits obtaining sufficient water. However, some rabbits may prefer to drink water from a bowl, which should be sturdy enough to prevent it being tipped over. Bowls / bottles should be checked regularly to ensure that the rabbits have continuous access to fresh, clean water.

#### **10.2 Food**

A high fibre diet should be given to rabbits, in the form of hay or similar forage material. Any sudden change in diet should be avoided to prevent digestive problems. Rabbits will graze for a large proportion of the day and there should be an adequate supply of food in the form of leafy greens and specially prepared pellets, to provide all the necessary nutrients, but the majority of the diet should be hay-based. Rabbits' teeth continue to grow throughout their lives, and they should be given hard gnawing material to help prevent the teeth from over-growing.

#### **10.3 Housing and shelter**

Rabbits very active animals so should be provided with as large a living space as possible. It is important that the height of their enclosure allows them to stand up on their hind feet without their ears touching the top of the enclosure. If movement is restricted, rabbits can develop skeletal problems, and in severe cases of restriction they can develop osteoporosis. Rabbits should have permanent access to a safe exercise area to give them the opportunity to perform a wide range of behaviours (e.g., running, hopping, jumping, playing, digging). The exercise area must provide adequate protection against predators, as well as protection from the elements. The exercise area should contain hiding places, tunnels and safe toys for them to chew and explore (there should be enough for each rabbit to perform the same behaviour simultaneously). Hay should be continuously available to rabbits. In addition, there must be a dry, comfortable, and draught-free place for the rabbits to retreat, with a plentiful supply of clean bedding. If the substrate is coarse or rough, this can cause sore hocks. Some rabbits are predisposed to this; however, unclean housing or rough surfaces within the hutch, can increase the risk of this occurring. Rabbits like to hide away so they should have continual access to safe hiding places. There should also be a separate sleeping compartment (ideally darkened) where they can retreat for security and sleep undisturbed. Throughout the sleeping area there should be adequate bedding which must be changed frequently to keep it clean and dry. Rabbits are social animals and should not be kept in solitary confinement. However, if two males are kept together, they may fight, and it may be necessary to separate these. Two females can usually be kept without any problems. The best combination is a neutered male with a neutered female. When introducing new rabbits for the first time, introductions need to be carefully managed and can take several weeks. Unsuccessful or rushed introductions can lead to fighting and to severe injuries.

#### **10.4 Fencing**

Where there is access to an outside run, care must be taken to ensure that the rabbits will not dig their way out and predators are able to dig in. The fencing should be strong and constructed properly to protect against other animals.

#### **10.5 Neutering**

Rabbits will breed at every opportunity, so it is advisable that male rabbits are neutered. Neutering may reduce fighting and prevents some serious medical problems. In females, neutering is a major health benefit as approximately 80% of unneutered females over the age of 3 years develop uterine tumours.

#### **10.6 Health**

It is strongly advised that all rabbits are vaccinated against Myxomatosis and VHD (Viral Haemorrhagic Disease). Both these diseases are widespread in the wild rabbit population so wild rabbits should be prevented from coming into contact with pet rabbits. Rabbits should be checked for cleanliness every day (more frequently in warm weather), and any build-up of faeces on the fur removed promptly. If it is necessary to wash rabbits, they should be thoroughly dried. Soiled and / or wet areas are prone to fly strike and subsequent infestation with maggots. Rabbits' teeth and nails should be checked frequently to ensure they are not becoming overgrown or have been damaged. If a rabbit's normal behaviour changes it can indicate they are not well or are in pain. If there are any concerns about a rabbit's health, they should be taken to a vet immediately.

#### **10.7 Breeding**

Breeding of rabbits is not permitted, therefore speak to your veterinary practice about neutering your rabbits.

### **Schedule 3 – Keeping Bees on Allotments**

- 11.1 You must have completed the British Beekeepers Association (BBKA) [www.bbka.org.uk](http://www.bbka.org.uk) basic exam.
- 11.2 You must have at least one years' experience of keeping bees or have been mentored for one year by a fully qualified and registered beekeeper.
- 11.3 You must have Public Liability Insurance that covers you and the Council against any claim for liability.
- 11.4 You must be registered with the National Bee Unit
- 11.5 You will be required to provide evidence of your qualifications and insurance.
- 11.6 The Tenant must erect a sign on the notice board and on their plot advising other Allotment Tenants that bees are present. A telephone number must be on the sign for contact in case of an emergency.
- 11.7 Hives are best sited away from other allotment gardeners, paths, and public roads. The bees should be encouraged to fly over high hedges, fences or 2m screens around the hives, especially if their flight path crosses a footpath.
- 11.8 Bees need a constant water supply, this may be a pond or water butt on the allotment garden.

### **Schedule 4 – Pigeon Loft and Keeping Pigeons on Allotments**

#### **12. Introduction**

- 12.1 Written permission will only be granted for plots on the North Warren Allotment Site

and no other, the total number of plots that written permission will be given for on the North Warren Allotment site is five (5).

12.2 The Town Council will only grant permission for one loft per tenant. Joint tenancies will be considered as singular when considering an application for a pigeon loft.

12.3 The RSPCA and the Royal Pigeon Racing Association have set out advice on the keeping of pigeons on allotments. The advice can be accessed at:

<https://www.nsalg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Welfare-of-animals-on-allotments.pdf>

12.4 The Tenant must provide proof of current membership of a recognized pigeon society or association.

12.5 The Allotment Officer will contact the neighbouring Tenants to enquire if they have any concerns or objections. These will be considered when the application is considered.

### **13. RSPCA Guidelines on keeping pigeons**

#### **13.1. The Loft**

Any pigeon loft should be well maintained, and free of any obvious damage, or structural irregularities which could cause damage to the birds and would need to include access to perches and nest boxes. The RPRA advise you must have 2sqf / 0.093sqm of loft space per pigeon. An example of a loft to house the maximum number of pigeons being sixty (60) would measure, 8ft (2.4 meters) Height x 15ft (4.56meters) Length x 8ft (2.43meters). Width.

The roof should be watertight and the whole interior free from damp. Lofts must be raised so they are at least 8 inches (203mm) to prevent access by vermin. Apart from the traps to allow entry of returning pigeons the loft should be made inaccessible to wild birds. The loft should face as near south as possible, allowing the birds to bask in the sun, but otherwise should be of draught- free construction. A landing board outside the loft should be provided.

Internally it should be divided into two compartments for the birds, although with the means to open the whole area up as one when necessary. There may be additionally food or equipment storage areas. In the spring nesting bowls will be placed in the nest boxes (provided), but during the remainder of the year perches can be in use. All equipment should be well-constructed and maintained and capable of being thoroughly cleaned when necessary. Water fountains and feed troughs will need to be supplied for each compartment, as will a pigeon bath and small pots for grit and other nutritional supplements. Equipment for cleaning should be readily available. A well-run loft will not show signs of accumulated dirt, droppings, old feathers or general dirt. There will always be available a good supply of clean fresh water, suitable bedding material, and a regular food supply. Grit should be provided. Pigeons should be allowed free exercise for some periods most days.

#### **13.2 Siting of the loft**

Lofts are usually sited with a south facing aspect and should be raised on brick piers to prevent rot and also reduce the access for vermin. If lofts are sited on the owner's land, then the normal planning laws will apply. If they are sited on rented land, the landlord must be in agreement with the use of the land for a pigeon loft and the normal planning

regulations should be followed. This would be particularly applicable if the loft was to be sited on local authority land, particularly allotments. Landlords may apply additional conditions which should be complied with. Loft owners should take precautions to ensure that the movement of other people or their animals which have access to the land cannot gain entry to the loft or interfere with it in such a way as the pigeons are disturbed. They should also be aware that if the pigeons are allowed free flight, they may cause annoyance to neighbours, and this should be prevented as far as possible.

### **13.3 Feeding and management.**

There are many different ways of feeding pigeons, all of which may be acceptable. However, it seems to be agreed that regularity is important and that the birds should be fed at the same times each day. It is common practice for the birds to become hungry before the next feed time, and this is acceptable, provided that the feed is supplied on a regular basis. Feed should be dust free and be a mixture of hard corn, peas and beans although this may be varied at certain times during the racing season to build the pigeons up. It should be stored in vermin-proof containers and should not appear stale. Grit should always be readily accessible, and it is advisable also to supply a mixture of mineral salts. Similarly exercise times and cleaning times should be the same each day, so that the birds have an established routine. Many fanciers allow their birds free exercise for several hours most days, but this will vary with the weather, training and breeding programmes and local conditions. The breeding season starts in January or early February and continues until May or June. The birds are paired up and will be confined to the nest boxes for short periods. The fancier will manage the breeding programme by removing unwanted eggs and replacing them with either pot eggs or old, non-fertile eggs. Records should be kept of all breeding, and indiscriminate breeding should be avoided. Young birds are normally fitted with a leg ring at seven days old. It is normal practice to race the birds whilst they are also rearing their young.