

So you want to keep poultry?

Keeping a few chickens in your back garden is becoming more popular but the decision to do so should not be taken lightly.

In the district of Newark and Sherwood there are no local bylaws preventing any one from keeping poultry but you should be aware of other legislation which will be applicable.

The following information may be useful to think about before you make your decision.

1. Check your deeds

Many properties have covenants to prevent you keeping poultry and other livestock.

2. Consider how you will avoid vermin

Food and water left out for poultry is likely to attract vermin such as rats and mice. Chicken houses may also provide harbourage for rats and mice. Where rats and mice occur in substantial numbers then Environmental Health can take action to eradicate the vermin, this may include the serving of a legal Notice on you and carrying out work in default, the cost of which will be recharged to you. In exceptional circumstances it may also lead to prosecution.

3. Consider how you will keep the area clean and tidy

In warm weather poorly kept poultry can result in unpleasant odours emanating and flies from the area, which may become a nuisance to your neighbours. Environmental Health can take action to abate such nuisances; this may include the serving of a legal Notice on you and carrying out work in default, the cost of which will be recharged to you. In exceptional circumstances it may also lead to prosecution.

4. Consider noise issues from the poultry you are to keep

Poultry whether chickens, cockerels, ducks geese etc all like to communicate with each other and such noise can become a nuisance to your neighbours. Environmental Health can take action to abate such nuisances; this may include the serving of a legal Notice on you and carrying out work in default, the cost of which will be recharged to you. In exceptional circumstances it may also lead to prosecution.

5. Consider what you are going to do with the eggs

If you decide to sell your eggs then it is a legal requirement to register with Environmental Health as a food business. Failure to do so may result in you being prosecuted. Depending on your sales you may also require planning permission for a change of use of your property. To register please contact the Customer Services on telephone number 01636 650000 or complete the online registration form by visiting www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk

6. Consider where you are going to keep your chickens

Chicken sheds and runs, depending on size may require planning permission. The planning department should be contacted direct on telephone number 01636 650000 or by visiting www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk Additionally the location of the runs and coops should not be near your own or your neighbour's home.

7. Consider the welfare of your poultry

In England and in Wales Animal Welfare Act 2006 has been introduced. It is still against the law to be cruel to an animal. But now you must also ensure that all the welfare needs of your animals are met.

These include the need:

- a. For a suitable environment (place to live)
- b. For a suitable diet
- c. To exhibit normal behaviour patterns
- d. To be housed with, or apart from, other animals (if applicable)
- e. To be protected from pain, injury, suffering and disease

The law also increases to 16 the minimum age at which a person can buy an animal and prohibits giving animals as prizes to unaccompanied children under this age.

Anyone who is cruel to an animal, or does not provide for its welfare needs, may be banned from owning animals, fined up to £20,000 and/or sent to prison.

8. Consider the number of poultry you are going to keep

By law you must register if you own or are responsible for a poultry premises with 50 or more birds. This requirement also applies even if the premises are only stocked with 50 or more birds for part of the year. At present, premises with fewer than 50 birds are not required to register, but DEFRA encourage keepers to do so voluntarily. Register by going to the DEFRA website.

9. Consider disease

Poultry are susceptible to many diseases and need regular checks one such disease is Avian influenza. This is a highly contagious viral disease affecting the respiratory, digestive and/or nervous system of many species of birds. **It is a notifiable disease and suspect cases must be notified to the local State Veterinary Service Divisional Veterinary Manager.**

For further details on keeping poultry you are advised to visit the of the animal welfare pages of the DEFRA website.