

Chickens & Cockerels

Background



Keeping a few hens in the back garden to provide eggs is becoming more and more popular. There are no laws preventing you from keeping hens, providing they are looked after properly and their welfare is taken seriously. It is advisable to check your property deeds or consult your landlord to make sure there are no covenants preventing the keeping of livestock.

Hens are normally quiet birds and do not often cause a nuisance, however the same cannot be said of cockerels. Cockerels will crow all day, starting when the sun rises, and can cause problems for neighbours. The Environmental Protection Section is receiving an increasing number of complaints about crowing cockerels. This is mainly as a result of them being kept in residential built up areas, rather than the more rural locations.

Food and water put out for poultry may attract rats and mice. In the summer months, poorly kept poultry may also result in unpleasant odours which can attract flies.

Advice to minimise disturbance to neighbours

Cockerel Noise

Remember **you don't need a cockerel for your hens to produce eggs**, and if you do keep a cockerel in a built up area it is likely that the noise of it crowing will disturb your neighbours. The best way to avoid cockerels disturbing your neighbours is not to have one.



Location: It is important that the cockerel is located as far as possible from neighbouring properties.

Competition: Other cockerels in the area will cause competition and may result in excess crowing.

Housing: Keep the coop as dark as possible to minimise early morning crowing as a cockerel will crow when light enters the coop (remember though that all coops need ventilation). Do not let the cockerels out of the coop until a reasonable hour; we recommend 8am. The coop ceiling can also be lowered to prevent the cockerel throwing back its head and crowing.

If, after trying the above suggestions your neighbours are still disturbed, consider rehoming the cockerel.

Odours and pests

Food waste and bedding and waste from the coop will start to smell as it decomposes. Not only is this unpleasant for you and your neighbours, it will quickly attract pests to your property. Odours will be worse in the summer as the decomposition occurs more quickly, and neighbours will also have their doors and windows open more often and will be spending more time in their gardens.

The chicken coop may provide shelter for rats and mice. Ensure that coops are cleaned regularly and remove uneaten food daily.

Present food to birds in a fixed and stable container rather than scattering food on the ground.

Ensure that food is stored in pest proof containers.

The Law

The Environmental Protection Section has a statutory duty to investigate complaints about noise and odour, and that would include noise from cockerels and any odours. In the event of a complaint, a letter will usually be sent to both parties asking for information to reinforce their case. This is usually done through completion of log sheets and communications with both parties. Officers will then consider the information and take steps to solve the problem; these steps can range from informal discussions to prosecution.

In the event of a Statutory Noise Nuisance being established, an Abatement Notice will be served upon the person responsible, or the owner of the property. This can prohibit noise emanating from the premises and may carry a heavy fine should the notice be breached. Failure to comply with this Notice is a criminal offence and upon conviction, Magistrates may impose a fine of up to £5,000.

Under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 there is a general duty to keep your property free from rats and mice. If any accumulations are either causing harbourage for vermin or is attracting significant numbers of vermin to the premises or land, the Council has powers to serve a legal notice requiring treatment and or clearing of the rubbish. Failure to comply with the notice may lead to the Council instigating legal action that can carry a fine of up to £1,000.

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