

## Guidelines for Poultry and Pigeon Keeping on Allotment Gardens

You may apply for permission to keep chickens (but not cockerels), ducks, geese or pigeons on your allotment.

All birds kept on York Allotments must be housed and cared for in accordance with the following recommendations:

All livestock must be provided with:

- clean, comfortable shelter to which they have continual access;
- fresh, clean drinking water on a daily basis;
- suitable food in ample quantity, to maintain health and well-being.

All livestock must be allowed:

- ample freedom of movement;
- the opportunity to follow natural patterns of behaviour;
- light during the hours of daylight;
- company of a like kind.

Livestock keepers should aim to prevent pecking or other forms of bullying, injury, parasitic infestation and disease by good management. If any of these occur there should be rapid diagnosis and treatment.



Unnecessary mutilation such as pinioning should be avoided.

All livestock must be housed, handled and transported in a way that causes minimum stress.

Emergency arrangements must be in place to cover fire, vandalism or illness of the person caring for the livestock.

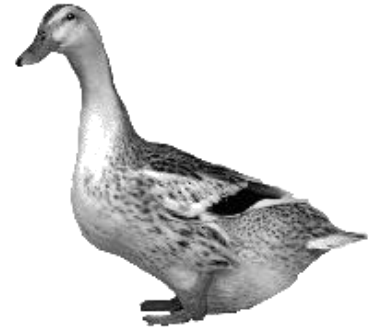
Failure to follow these basic recommendations could mean the loss of your livestock and prosecution.

## Food And Water

All birds need fresh food and water on a daily basis. Stale or contaminated food or water must be removed daily. All birds must have access to fresh water at all times. In freezing weather you will need to check that drinking water has not frozen over and thaw or replace it as appropriate.

Ducks and geese need to be provided with a water container that is deep enough to get their heads fully under. This container must be moved regularly to prevent the surrounding ground becoming very muddy and contaminated.

Pigeons must be given the opportunity to bath once a week. A galvanised iron bath can be placed on the ground outside, preferably in a sunny spot, and filled to a depth of 4”.



## Shelter and Housing

Livestock must have access to shelter at all times. Poultry houses and pigeon lofts should be suitable for the birds using them, comfortable, clean and well-ventilated.

The space under poultry houses can easily become infested with rats. To avoid this, poultry houses must be raised on legs to give an open space of at least 30 cm. / 1 ft. underneath. Alternatively portable arks may be used, moved around regularly.

Housing must be kept in good repair to protect birds from wind and rain and from predators such as rats and foxes. In very hot weather adequate shade must be provided.

Perches provided for birds must not be too wide or narrow, to prevent birds straining their feet. Wire mesh floors must not be used for birds housed indoors, due to the strain caused to the feet.

Housing must be regularly cleaned and disinfected as necessary. Litter or floor dressing and nesting material must be checked regularly and replaced as necessary, so that it does not become wet, acidic or infested with mites and other harmful pests.



Handling a racing pigeon

## Handling

Birds must be handled gently and quietly to cause minimum distress.

When catching birds care must be taken to avoid panic, causing birds to injure themselves.

All livestock must be transported in appropriate carriers.

## Poultry Pens and Runs

The ground poultry is kept on should be rotated to prevent a build up of pests and to avoid the fouling of the soil.

Livestock must be given sufficient space to move freely and to follow their normal patterns of behaviour. An example of this would be providing chickens with enough space to scratch the ground, peck for food and dust bathe.

Lack of space can lead to feather pulling and comb pecking among poultry. If hens have to be kept indoors in bad weather and pecking becomes a problem, a bundle of greens tied in a corner can help to keep the birds busy.

Earth runs should be dug over and limed periodically. Grass runs should be rested and limed periodically. This stops the build up of pests and diseases. If land becomes 'fowl-sick' it cannot be used by poultry for at least two years. Livestock must not be kept in continuously muddy conditions which can cause ill-health or discomfort.

## Pests and Predators

Livestock does attract rats and mice. Grain and other foodstuffs must be stored in rodent proof containers. If you think there are rats in your allotment garden please contact YACIO for further advice. Foxes visit allotment sites so poultry needs to be shut in at dusk in fox-proof housing.



## Emergencies

In an emergency, action will be taken in the best interests of the welfare of livestock. In the case of fire or vandalism birds will, if necessary, be removed to a place of safe keeping until you, or one of your emergency contacts can be contacted.

Please inform the Administrator of any change in contact details.

If a person is suspected of ill treating her/his livestock Animal Welfare Inspectors will be called and livestock removed for their well being.

It is illegal to bury livestock carcasses in an allotment garden. You must make appropriate arrangements for the disposal of any carcasses.



## Animal Health and Welfare

We aim to ensure that all livestock on allotments is clean, comfortable and well cared for. If you are concerned about the condition or treatment of any livestock on an allotment site, please contact one of the following:

YACIO - See Below

York RSPCA on (01904) 654949  
or the RSPCA National Cruelty Line on 0300 1234 999

## Avian Flu

YACIO maintains records of all allotment tenants who keep poultry or pigeons on their plot, so that they can be contacted quickly in case of a local outbreak of Avian Flu (commonly known as Bird Flu).

If you find more than three dead birds of the same species, or more than five dead birds of different species in the same location, you should contact the Department of the Environment Farming & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) who will arrange for the carcasses to be tested for disease. The helpline number is 08459 335577 (6.00 am-10.00 pm daily).

## Queries and Questions

For any other queries relating to livestock on your allotment garden please contact the YACIO.

E-mail: [contact@yorkallotments.org](mailto:contact@yorkallotments.org)

Phone: 07746268588

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