

# Caring for Poultry



Wellingtonians may keep chickens and other poultry in urban areas for their eggs, and as pets. Poultry includes chickens, ducks, geese, roosters, swans, quails and peacocks.

As a poultry owner you have responsibilities toward your poultry and members of the community to not cause nuisance. This factsheet provides some advice on responsible poultry ownership. Part of responsible ownership is providing poultry with nutritious food, a safe and healthy home, and activities and play.

## Limits on numbers

There are limitations within urban areas, in accordance with the Animal Bylaw. Permission is required from the Council to have more than eight poultry or to keep a rooster in an urban area. It is difficult to manage roosters to stop them from crowing loudly, so there is high probability that nuisance will occur when kept in urban areas.

Poultry are social animals and it's recommended you keep more than one. However, keeping a large number of poultry can create issues such as noise and odour, and public health issues if kept in unsatisfactory conditions. This problem is exaggerated in urban areas where many households are close together.

## Getting permission

Applications for permission to keep a rooster and/or more than 8 poultry in urban areas should be made to the Council and detail the following:

- address of the property, and contact details for the applicant
- the number of poultry/roosters the applicant wishes to keep
- any relevant information about the welfare, hygiene, control, and confinement

- any steps taken by the applicant to minimise any nuisance (including if they have discussed their application with neighbours)
- any other information the applicant may see as being relevant.

## Housing your poultry

Poultry need proper containment and shelter. Poultry shouldn't be able to leave your property to roam. As well as a chicken coop, either an enclosed run or adequate fencing of your property is required to keep your chickens safe. Chickens usually only go into their house to sleep - they won't use their house as shelter from bad weather. For this reason they need to be provided with an alternative shelter so they can get out of the rain.

Two or three chickens should have a space of approximately 10 sq. m. More chickens require more space. If your poultry are too cramped they're likely to fight, have behavioural issues and will need more frequent cleaning up after.

Your chicken coop should be set away from neighbouring fences and in a place that will avoid causing nuisance to neighbours. You should speak with your neighbours before getting any chickens. The chicken's area should include perches for roosting, a surface for pecking and scratching, and a secluded nesting area. Perches should be quite wide (around 10cm), up off the ground and allow your chickens to perch comfortably. Poultry need enrichment and mental stimulation. This can be provided with food, toys, swings and an area to dust bathe in.

If you are away from home, you'll need to make arrangements for your poultry to be cared for while you're gone.

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## Poultry hygiene

Your poultry must not cause public health concerns. Owners need to do as much as possible to keep the area clean. Chicken coops should be thoroughly cleaned out at least once a week. Nesting boxes and the floor of the coop should be kept clean and dry. You can line them with hay, untreated wood chips, untreated sawdust, or shredded newspaper so it can be easily removed when cleaned out.

To avoid unpleasant smells and attracting flies and pests, owners should not allow excess food and chicken bedding waste to accumulate. At least once a week, make sure this waste is collected, bagged, and disposed of. Scattering food across the ground can attract rodents. Owners can control this by using vermin-proof feeders specifically for poultry. This also keeps the rain out so your poultry have dry food. Food should be stored out of reach of rats in a sealed shed.

## Sourcing your chickens

Remember that 50 percent of eggs hatched may be roosters. This can cause a problem in urban areas, as you need specific permission to have roosters. Ethically sourced poultry is recommended, such as adopting rescue hens.

## Poultry care courses

Gaining practical knowledge and experience prior to obtaining poultry is recommended. There are courses in Wellington to help with choosing the appropriate poultry for your situation and getting the right set up for your poultry to be comfortable.

## Poultry Costs

Suppliers generally charge \$15 to \$30 per chicken. Rescue hens are available from Helping You Help Animals (HUHA) for \$5. Chicken coops vary as they can be self-made, bought second hand or bought new for as much as \$500. A chicken run is also required, which requires chicken wire and stakes. These can be found at hardware stores or on Trade Me. Poultry create ongoing costs including food and veterinary care.

## Emergency Preparedness

A plan for your poultry should be included in your wider household emergency plan and kit.

This should include:

- at least 7 days' of food and water per animal

- a means of moving the poultry in case of the need to evacuate, such as a small cage or cat box
- a plan in case primary caregivers are unable to take care of the animals.

## End of life

As a responsible pet owner it's your responsibility to make suitable arrangements for your pet's body at the end of its life. This can be arranged through a vet. Burials at home should be done in an appropriate manner and away from waterways. If your pet is euthanised by a vet, they cannot have a shallow burial due to the toxins in the injection. Alternatively, you can take your pet to the landfill. It's an offence under the Animal Bylaw to bury a carcass in a manner that is or is likely to become a nuisance, injurious or hazardous to health or safety.

For poultry that are kept for meat purposes, some people may consider homekill. This is when animals are slaughtered and butchered for your consumption and use. It is illegal to sell or trade homekill meat. The poultry can be killed by you on your property, or a listed homekill service provider can be hired. There are legal requirements to ensure there is no unreasonable suffering, pain or distress. You are responsible for meeting these legal requirements for animal welfare in the Animal Welfare Act and Codes of Welfare. If you are considering homekill, please see [www.mpi.govt.nz/homekill](http://www.mpi.govt.nz/homekill)

## Resolving disputes

If your neighbour's poultry has become a source of nuisance, it's recommended you speak with your neighbour about the situation first. This often results in the matter being resolved quickly. If problems persist, please call Council on 04 499 4444.

If you suspect there are animal welfare issues, please call SPCA on 389 8044.

## Further information

- [www.wellington.govt.nz/animalpolicy](http://www.wellington.govt.nz/animalpolicy)
- Animal Bylaw (2016)
- Animal Policy (2017)
- Animal Welfare Act

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