

Melton Constable Parish Council

Animals on Allotments Policy

Melton Constable Parish Council is keen to encourage its allotment tenants to make the most of their allotment plot, but you must not keep animals on your allotment unless you are prepared to look after their welfare needs. This means having both the time and the know-how to do this properly. Before you start if you have never kept hens before it is important that you learn how to keep them properly. If you want to keep animals on your allotment you will need to be absolutely sure that you can visit them at least once every day. This includes weekends and bank holidays all through the year. Twice a day is better for hens, so that you can shut your animals in at night to keep them safe from foxes, as well as let them out when you feed them in the morning. If the weather is very hot or very cold you must be prepared to visit more than once to check your animals have access to water. Frozen water is the same as having no water at all! If you go away on holiday then you must arrange for someone else to visit your animals every day on your behalf.

All feed must be stored in a covered metal container, to deter vermin. Feed or water provided outside should be sheltered to keep it clean and dry and must be kept out of the reach of rats and other wild animals. Any food stored on the plot must be kept clean and dry and in a metal container with a lid so that rats and other wild animals cannot get to it. Any spilled food must be cleaned up immediately so that rats and other pests are not attracted.

If a tenant wants to keep bees, they must write to the Parish Council to ask for permission. We will only give permission if you are an experienced bee-keeper who has passed the British Bee Keepers Association (BBA) basic exam and you hold public liability insurance.

Remember that at least two thirds (66%) of your allotment must be used for growing. This only leaves a third (33%) of it for a shed and a greenhouse, any lawn or patio area and any animal sheds and runs. Each hen must have at least 2 square feet of space inside the hen house and at least 4 square feet of space in the run. You can give more space but not less. Raising houses/hutches off the floor by at least 6 inches (15cm) stops rats hiding or nesting underneath. A ramp will then be needed between the house/hutch entrance and the run. The run should be covered in wire/mesh that stops animals escaping or becoming trapped and protects them from rats, foxes and other wild animals. If mesh is used for the floor of a chicken run, the gaps between the mesh must be big enough (at least 3 inches) for hens to scratch the ground to forage. The animals you keep on your plot must always be kept for your own use and not for any business or profit.

If you decide you want to keep livestock on your plot, you must fill in an emergency contact form BEFORE you bring any animals onto your plot. It is a condition of your tenancy with us in the new allotment tenancy agreement. We must have a telephone number, or numbers, where we are able to contact you at any time or at least leave a message. You are responsible in law for looking after the needs of your animals. It is a good idea to give these numbers to the plot holders next to you so they can let you know straightaway if they notice any problems with your animals. If we try to contact you to tell you your animals are at risk of danger or have escaped, we will expect you to act quickly to sort things out. We are aware that phone numbers change but it is your responsibility to keep these contact numbers up to date. If we cannot contact you in an emergency because you have

not told us about changes to your emergency contact numbers, we will ask you to remove your animals from our site. Also, if we cannot contact you and your animal needs urgent veterinary treatment, we will pass on the cost of the treatment to you for payment

Although the 1950 Allotment Act allows plot holders to keep hens, it also says that they must not be kept in a way that makes them “prejudicial (harmful) to health or a nuisance”. This means anything that you do - or don’t do - that makes it likely that your animals will spread disease to other animals or people or where they cause a problem of smell, noise or damage to other tenants and their plots. If we feel that there is a problem with the way you keep your animals we can come onto your plot at any time to investigate. If you do not put things right after we have asked you to, then we will write to you and ask you to remove your animals from the allotment site.

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 makes the owner responsible in law for looking after the needs of their animals. It says that the owner 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, 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 we have good reason to believe that you have failed to meet the needs of animals kept on your allotment, we may take steps to end your tenancy.