

Caring for poultry – factsheet



Wellingtonians may keep hens and other poultry in residential areas if they follow Wellington City Council bylaws. Poultry refers to domesticated birds that are kept or raised for their eggs, meat, feathers, or companionship.

This factsheet provides some guidelines and recommendations on responsible poultry ownership.

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 on how many poultry birds you can keep within Residential areas, in accordance with the Wellington City Council Animal Bylaw 2024 .

If you live in a Residential area, you may keep a combined maximum of eight hens and/or female ducks, or a maximum of 12 female quails without the Council's permission. No roosters or peafowl are to be kept in Residential areas and properties on Large Lot Residential Zones unless prior written permission has been granted by the Council. It is difficult to manage roosters to stop them from crowing loudly, so there is a high probability that they will cause a noise nuisance in Residential areas.

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

Getting permission

Applications for permission to keep a rooster and/or Applications for permission to keep any of the following poultry in Residential areas should be addressed to the Council and emailed to publichealthenquiries@wcc.govt.nz:

- Rooster or peafowl
- More than eight hens and/or female ducks
- More than twelve female quails

The application should include the following information:

- The 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 poultries' 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

Your poultry need a safe and enriching environment to live in. You must ensure they are adequately contained and have shelter. Housing requirements differ depending on what poultry you are housing; the best way to ensure you have an adequate set up is doing your research.

Hens should be housed in a coop with access to an enclosed run, or an adequately fenced area of your property. This allows your hens to exercise, enjoy the sunshine and fresh air, and express normal behaviours. They should be locked in the coop at night for their own safety and comfort.

The recommended amount of space for housing two or three hens is approximately 10 sq. m and adding more hens to your flock would require more space. Other poultry species' needs may differ, so ensure you check what is ideal for your birds. If poultry have inadequate space, they are likely to fight or have behaviour issues, which compromises their welfare. They would also need to be cleaned more frequently.

Your coop should be set away from neighbouring fences and in a place that will avoid causing a nuisance to neighbours. You should speak to your neighbours before getting any poultry birds.

When it comes to hens their living areas should include perches for roosting, a surface for pecking and scratching, and a secluded nesting area. Perches should be quite wide (around 10cm), installed above the ground and allow your hens to perch comfortably. All poultry should be provided enrichment for mental stimulation to enhance their welfare. 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.

Poultry hygiene

The Animal Bylaw 2024 states that poultry enclosures must be cleaned regularly to prevent offensive odours, and all waste must be disposed of appropriately. Owners need to do as much as possible to keep the area clean and not cause a public health concern.

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 soiled coop bedding to accumulate. The soiled bedding should be collected, bagged, and disposed of at least once a week.

Poultry feed should be stored securely and fed to the poultry in vermin-proof containers. This is to avoid attracting rodents and protect the feed from the elements.

Sourcing your chickens

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

Poultry Costs

The cost to purchase a hen usually ranges from \$15 to \$30 depending on the supplier. You can also purchase rescue hens from Helping You Help Animals (HUHA) who charge a small adoption fee. Chicken coop and run costs can vary depending on whether you make one yourself, buy one second hand, or buy one brand new.

If you wish to keep other poultry, you can purchase them from suppliers by contacting your local Bird Club or shelters to enquire whether they have any. The costs will vary depending on the species, supplier and/or rehoming agency fee.

It is important that, alongside startup costs for keeping poultry, you consider ongoing costs as well. Ongoing costs include but are not limited to food, parasite control, bedding, enrichment items, 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 end-of-life care for your poultry. You can arrange this through your local veterinarian who will explain the process with you and the aftercare options.

Alternative options are using a home kill service or culling the poultry yourself. There are legal requirements to ensure there is no unreasonable suffering, pain, or distress during the process. You are responsible for meeting these legal animal welfare requirements located in the Animal Welfare Act and Codes of Welfare. It is illegal to sell or trade home kill meat. If you are considering home kill, please refer to the MPI website 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 **04 389 8044**.

Further information

- *Interpretation of Residential areas in the Animal Bylaw 2024* (scroll to 'R')
- *Animal Bylaw 2024 - Plans, policies and bylaws - Wellington City Council*
- *Animal Welfare Act*
- *Homekilled meat: rules and food safety - MPI*

**Absolutely Positively
Wellington City Council**

Me Heke Ki Pōneke