



NEWCASTLE·UNDER·LYME
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Noise - cockerels crowing

Advice about keeping poultry

There are no nationwide restrictions to prevent you from keeping poultry, but some individual properties do have covenants which provide an obstacle. You'll need to check the deeds of your property to find out if this applies to you.

Whilst keeping poultry can be an enjoyable activity, prior consideration should always be given to the full extent of what is involved, including the not so pleasant aspect of culling unwanted birds, and whether the keeping of poultry could cause problems for neighbours particularly if you intend keeping a cockerel.

You don't need to keep a cockerel for your hens to produce eggs. It is a mistaken belief that hens lay better when there's a cockerel around. If you do keep a cockerel, think carefully about how you will dispose of unwanted chicks and whether the cockerel is likely to cause complaints about noise from your neighbours.

Defining the sex of juvenile birds can be difficult, but some hatcheries will offer a 'no-cockerel guarantee' when you make your purchase.

The following practical measures may be suggested to prevent your birds causing disturbance to your neighbours:

- Ensuring that the cockerel is located as far as practicable from neighbouring residential properties.
- Keeping the coop as dark as possible to minimise early morning crowing.
- Lowering the ceiling height of the coop will prevent the cockerel from throwing back its head and crowing.
- Sounds proof the housing.
- Reducing competition - other cockerels in the area will cause them to compete with each other and may result in excess crowing.
- Separate cockerels from broody hens.
- Removing the cockerel

You should also take measures to keep your poultry in such a manner that does not create smell or dust nuisance for neighbours or attract vermin into the area.

Research has shown that there should be a period of darkness for poultry in each 24hr period. To ensure laying is not affected the birds should be given 8 hours of light per day.

Crowing Hens

A crowing hen is a fairly well known phenomenon. It is usually caused by hormonal changes. These may be as a result of an infected ovary, or a tumour in the same area. In the case of the former, the infection can often be cleared up with antibiotics, or it may clear of its own accord. With the latter, there is nothing that can be done.

There may be other signs, apart from the crowing, including an enlarged comb and the development of male plumage after the moult. She may also try to mount other hens. If the cause is an infected ovary, and it clears up, she will probably revert to her usual state.

Is it illegal for a cockerel to crow?

No, but if you own a cockerel(s) you must ensure that the crowing does not cause a Statutory Nuisance to others. A Statutory Nuisance is a "material interference with the comfort and enjoyment of another's home."

In practice, the crowing would have to be excessive and unreasonable in the circumstances and significantly interfere with the use and enjoyment of someone's home. Examples could be:

- crowing for prolonged periods;
- frequent excessive crowing and;
- crowing at unreasonable hours i.e. early morning or late at night.

As an owner of a cockerel you should carefully consider whether the area in which you live is suitable to have such livestock and also carefully consider how the bird is kept.

Investigating complaints

If we receive a complaint about noise we are obliged by law to investigate it. This may include:

- Asking the complainant to note down all times that they are being disturbed
- Officers undertaking visits to witness the disturbance
- The use of noise recording equipment
- If we are satisfied that the noise constitutes a Statutory Nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, an Abatement Notice will be served requiring you to stop the disturbance, and if this is not complied with, you could face a maximum fine of £5000 (domestic premises), or an unlimited fine (commercial/industrial premises)

Other general issues relating to the keeping of poultry

Food and water left out for poultry may attract vermin such as rats and mice. Chicken houses may also provide shelter for rats and mice. To prevent this happening, make it a part of your regular routine to clean the shelters and remove uneaten food. Present food to birds in a fixed and stable container rather than scattering food on the ground.

Under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 there is a general duty to keep your property free from rats and mice. In the summer poorly kept poultry may result in unpleasant odours which can attract flies. These can become a nuisance to you and your neighbours.

Sale of Eggs

Should you decide to sell your eggs to friends, over the garden gate or on a market stall it is a requirement you register as a food business. For information and to register contact Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council's Food and Safety Team on 01782 742590 or email customerservices@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk

Useful Contacts

Noise advice – www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/noise 01782 742590

Pest Control Services – www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/pestcontro 01782 742590