

There are many good reasons for keeping a small number of poultry in the back yard. The keeping of poultry can assist households to live more sustainably by recycling kitchen scraps into fertilisers and having the added bonus of producing delicious fresh eggs. Below are some suggestions that can be implemented to ensure that your poultry are kept in a healthy and sanitary environment.

Shelter

A well constructed poultry shelter helps to minimise problems associated with poultry keeping. The key points are:

- The structure should be made of sound materials, (eg timber, wire netting and sheet metal) so that it is rat proof, weather proof and allows good ventilation. Sheet metal (or other material) surrounding the framework should extend at least 200mm below ground level and 400mm above ground level, to prevent access by rodents.
- It should be at least 1.5m in height
- The internal floor surface should be smooth, hard and impervious to moisture to allow for cleaning, and should be laid at least 100mm above the surrounding ground level. Concrete is recommended.
- Each bird should have a minimum floor space of 0.4m²
- All birds should be kept in the enclosure at all times so that they do not create a nuisance.

Depending on the size of the shelter, it may need approval from your local Council. Contact your local Council to find out any size restrictions that may be in place.

It is also important to ensure that due consideration is given to the location of the poultry shelter so that neighbours are not affected by noise or odour. The following minimum set back distances are given as a guide:

- 1m from the property boundary
- 1.5m from any other structure (sheds, pergolas or carports)
- 15 meters (or 10 meters if 12 or less birds are kept) from any street, road, dwelling, shop, factory, public building or other place used by people for living or working.
- There also may be restrictions on the numbers of poultry that can be kept. It is best to contact the General Inspector at your local Council to see if there are any restrictions.

Feeding

Food and water left for animals and birds can attract rats and mice, therefore it must be kept in vermin proof containers. These are readily available through hardware and farm suppliers. It is also important to keep bulk storage of food in vermin proof containers.

Waste Disposal

Poultry enclosures must be kept in a clean and sanitary condition at all times. Droppings need to be cleaned out regularly and either buried, or in the case of poultry manure, may be composted for use as mulch or soil conditioner. Any dropped food needs to be removed or returned to the vermin proof feed container.

Any dead animals or birds should be lawfully disposed of in a sanitary manner.

Litter

Keep the litter dry at all times. For this reason, the fowls drinking water should be placed outside the shelter. Cut a hole through the shelter wall to allow your fowl to drink. Rake the litter occasionally and encourage the fowls to scratch amongst the litter by throwing some wheat under the perches. Any wet litter should be removed. Wet food should never be thrown on the litter.

Pest Control

Fly baits and fly paper may be placed inside the shelter, out of reach of the fowls. Check these regularly and replace when necessary.

Rats and mice should be discouraged by placing all food in vermin proof containers unless it is for immediate consumption and keeping the poultry shelter in a clean condition.

Roosters

It is strongly advised that roosters are not kept in heavily populated areas to prevent potential noise and nuisance problems that may arise.