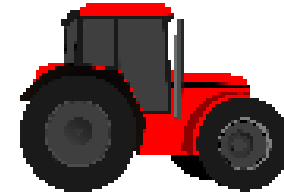


Rowley Agricultural Commission



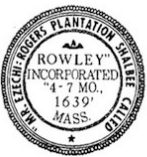
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KEEPING CHICKENS

Rowley is a “Right to Farm,” community. Unlike many towns in Massachusetts, Rowley does not have strict ordinances, require permits, and/or charge fees to keep chickens. The Agricultural Commission has formulated these guidelines for those wishing to have egg-laying hens.



Before you own Chickens

Robert Frost’s poem, “ Mending Wall,” is where the phrase, “Good fences make good neighbors,” came from. Let’s apply this to raising chickens. We ask you to be very considerate of your neighbors, first and foremost. Some neighbors may welcome having feathered friends next door; others may not. The Agriculture Commission encourages having conversations with neighbors *before* getting chickens.



Town of Rowley

Agricultural Commission



Phone: (978) 948-2372

Roosters

1. The Agricultural Commission **strongly** discourages keeping roosters unless you are a farm that qualifies for 61A*. They are noisy and usually irritate neighbors.
2. For the same reason, the Agricultural Commission discourages keeping Guinea fowl except on 61A farms.

Husbandry

It's important to educate yourself about sound husbandry:

1. Talk with others who have experience.
2. The Massachusetts Department of Agriculture outlines best practices and biosecurity information for poultry.
3. Familiarize yourself with Avian Flu and ramifications if an outbreak should occur.
4. Salmonella is a big concern with chickens. Please protect yourself with safe handling practices and good hygiene.

<http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/animal-health/poultry/>

Coop Size and Placement:

1. At a minimum, the interior of a coop needs to be large enough for each bird to have 2 square feet of space.
2. If you are planning an enclosed outdoor area, each bird needs 5 square feet.
3. The Agriculture Commission strongly recommends that the coop and enclosure be at least 10 feet from a property line.



Care and feeding:

1. All chickens *must* be treated humanely with access to fresh food and water at *all* times.
2. Please remember that live animals need care every day. We recommend having a plan for your birds when you are going to be away.
3. Formulate a plan for ALL severe weather, no matter what the season. Birds need a warm, inside space and fresh, not frozen, water.
4. Coops, yards, and enclosures should be kept **clean and tidy**.
5. Have a plan for handling manure and bedding. Do not let it pile up creating an odor nuisance for neighbors.

Is Free Range Better Than An Enclosure?

Here are some considerations:

1. **Predators** – coyotes, foxes, stray dogs, and cats do pose a threat to all fowl. AND, don't forget to look skyward. Many large hawks can also easily take chickens.
2. **Parasites** – they are everywhere - in the grass, the soil, and in manure. They also thrive in damp conditions. We recommend that the grass has dried before letting them out to roam.
3. **Neighbors** -Remember "Good Fences Make Good Neighbors?" Free ranging chickens should only free range on *your* property.
4. **Avian Flu** - Keep in mind that Avian Flu is spread through contact with wild fowl: Canada geese, mallards, etc. So, are they safer in an enclosure? We think so especially if you have a pond, stream, or pool that would attract wildlife.

*61A refers to the special tax code for agricultural property. In order to qualify and receive 61A designation, a property must conform to the State's tax laws.

<https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleIX/Chapter61A>

