

CHICKEN ADOPTION GUIDE



Finding your new companions

Step 1: Submit your application form (available on our website) and photos

We will need to see photos and measurements of your chicken's accommodation. Please email these to: smallanimals1@raystede.org

We will consider your application and contact you if we need a few more details or to invite you to Raystede for a chat. If you do not hear from us, we have everything we need for now, thank you.

Step 2: Wait for the magic to happen

Once you have registered with us, please keep an eye on our website for new arrivals and contact us if you feel someone might suit your home.

When animals arrive at Raystede, we get to know them through behaviour and medical assessments. Our expert animal care teams carefully use this information alongside your application to see if the match could be a success. Finding the perfect pet can take time. Please be patient; they will be worth the wait.

Step 3: Visit Raystede

We will invite you to Raystede as soon as we have found any potential matches for your home. We will discuss the animals' background, health and behaviour. This sometimes requires a few visits. You will need to provide photo ID, proof of address, and if applicable, written landlord permission to have a pet in your property.

Step 4: Take your new pet home

Once we have found your perfect partner, we will book an adoption appointment; our Rehoming Team will talk you through caring for your pet. Your adoption fee will help us continue our work to give animals a better life.

Rehoming criteria

Our housing requirements aim to ensure the best welfare standards for chickens. Our team are happy to offer advice in purchasing or adapting your set-up to provide the best home before adopting.

Chickens are social animals and should be kept in pairs or groups. A cockerel can be paired with one or more hens.

Chickens need a fully secure, fox-proof enclosure, including a shed, stable or outbuilding. If allowing your chickens to free-range in your garden, they must be supervised and the garden must be secure.

Peace of mind when adopting

- All chickens are health checked regularly

You will also receive:

- A comprehensive adoption pack and appointment with our Rehoming Team to ensure you have everything you need to care for your new chickens

Follow-up advice from our expert team

Thank you for your adoption fee, which will help to cover some of our costs:

Adoption fees: Hens: £10 each Cockerels: £5 each

The average daily cost of care for our chickens, ducks and geese at Raystede is in excess of £70.

Chicken care

Owning chickens can be very rewarding, but it is a big responsibility and a long-term commitment. Did you know that chickens can live up to 6-8 years?

Cockerels are vocal animals. If you have close neighbours it may be sensible to have a discussion with them about the possibility of noise beforehand.

Check your chickens for signs of injury or illness every day and seek veterinary advice if necessary.

- If your chickens become ill, a specialist vet would be required; do you know where your nearest exotic/farm vet practice is located?
- Worming: poultry must be wormed at least twice a year.
- Lice and mites: treat your poultry regularly for lice and red mite.

Housing your birds

You may wish to buy an already made hen house or preferably, you could convert an ordinary shed. This should have nesting/sleeping areas and roosting perches inside, and have an enclosed run attached. Accommodation should be well ventilated, weather-proof and allow in natural light.

Chickens spend much of their time foraging so will need a large outside area to keep themselves occupied, this should be attached to their housing or offer secure free-ranging. Trees and plants within their outside area are a good source of shelter, food and enrichment.

Chickens also enjoy sunbathing and dustbathing so their accommodation should include access to natural sunlight and either an area of naturally dry ground or something such as a shallow plastic paddling pool filled with a mixture of light soil and fine sand.

Settling in

When you get your birds home, place them into the hen house and let them have access to a small run so they can go outside. Keeping them to a limited space will help them feel secure and allow them to settle in their new home. You may need to encourage them to go back inside at night, when it is dark or raining.

Ex-commercial hens: initially, you may notice they are quite weak where they have been kept in large numbers for so long. They may also be missing feathers, but these should re-grow in a few weeks.

Chickens are wonderfully nosy and soon become friendly when you are in the garden. They also reward you by laying eggs. Once they have reached their end of lay please keep them as an extension of your family.

Introducing to your current birds

Keep your new birds separate from your other birds until they are fit enough to defend themselves from the flock. Let them see the other birds, as this will make it easier to establish the group hierarchy.

To minimise bullying, have plenty of feeding areas and space. If bullying persists try rubbing Vaseline on the comb of the bird being picked on, so the dominant bird cannot do too much harm. If the problem continues, separate the bully from the rest of the flock for a while and slowly begin reintroducing the birds.

Diet

- **Layers pellets with fresh foods** including corn, grit to aid digestion and small amounts of healthy treats such as fresh green vegetables and cooked rice/pasta.
- **Fresh water** available at all times, as birds can drink a lot throughout the day. They can also receive an apple cider vinegar supplement in their drinking water to promote general health and improve plumage.