



CONDITIONS OF CHICKEN BOARDING AT MERRYBOWER

Last updated on 1st April 2021

By booking a holiday for your birds at Merrybower, you confirm that you have read and agree to the following:

COVID-19

We will continue to follow the 'COVID safe' guidelines issued by the government. To help to keep the birds safe (from avian flu as below) and to keep ourselves safe, we ask that birds are transported in secure containers and we will meet you at our front gate for handover. Please wear a mask and keep a distance. Your birds will immediately be taken to their holiday accommodation and will be fed and watered. We will send you a photo of them in their new abode! When collecting birds, please liaise with us in advance about the pick-up time and we will meet you at the gate. Please allow half an hour waiting time as we won't put the girls into their crates/boxes until you arrive, to cut down on the time they are in there. Please feel free to drop them off/collect them early in the morning or late at night if you prefer, as this is less stressful for the birds as they can be lifted straight from their coops into boxes/crates, instead of being collected from their runs. They are let out at 07.30 in the morning and bedtime depends on the time of the year.

Chicken illness

Please let us know in advance if your chicken is ill. We cannot accept sick birds with illnesses that can be transmitted to other birds in our care. In the event of illness, please talk to us in advance, please don't just turn up on the day! A vet can advise you if your chicken is contagious. Signs to look out for include a runny nose, fluid from the beak, diarrhoea, gasping for air, etc. Please watch out for lice, mites and scaly leg mite. Please inform us of any recent change in behaviour or anything at all you are worried about so that we can keep an extra eye out. We have the facilities to bring an ill bird indoors for extra TLC.

Avian flu

Over the winter of 2020/21, Merrybower was within a DEFRA designated 10km Surveillance Zone due to an outbreak north-west of Derby. This prevented the movement of birds from your property and all birds had to be kept under cover to avoid contact with wild birds. In the event of another breakout of avian flu, and if Merrybower is included within a designated 10km Surveillance Zone or 3km Protection Zone, we are not allowed by law to accept holiday boarders. We will refund any deposits made in full. We are not, however, in any way liable for the costs of holiday cancellations on your part, e.g. if you are unable to find alternative accommodation for your chickens and have to cancel your holiday. We will inform you as soon as possible in the event of an outbreak and its likely duration, if known. Chicken 'lockdown' for this purpose will often last for months, not weeks.

If your chickens are boarding with us at the time of an avian flu outbreak, by law they may not leave our premises. They will be kept in their same accommodation with a covered run in the same top-notch conditions as our own birds and moved regularly onto fresh ground. You will not be charged for their

additional time with us, but we reserve the right to ask for a contribution to their food costs. We will stay in touch with you about the DEFRA/government advice.

During an avian flu outbreak we follow the additional instructions laid down by DEFRA – e.g. all animals under covered runs and disinfection of footwear/no other people on site and we continually monitor the situation.

If your chickens are staying with us and our own flocks or neighbouring flocks are affected by avian flu during an outbreak, all birds, including boarders, would have to be culled. This would not be our decision, but is a requirement of DEFRA, i.e. laid down by law. We do not pay any form of compensation for the loss of boarders for this reason. We would liaise with you in advance, but would obviously have no choice but to follow DEFRA's instructions.

Chickens that become ill whilst boarding

Our own flocks, and our boarders, are checked visually several times a day. If a chicken becomes ill during her time with us, we will contact you immediately. We always seek veterinary advice for our own girls and would treat your girls in the same way. If the chicken has an illness that is treatable, we will treat them following a vet's instructions. If a vet thinks that a chicken cannot be treated and recommends that she is put to sleep, we will discuss this with you first where possible. We will always do what is best for the chicken. In an emergency, we may not have time to talk to you first. Chickens sometimes show no signs of illness and can die very suddenly, especially when they are older. Chickens receive the best possible care whilst here and are not neglected in any way. We cannot be held liable for the death of a chicken in our care and no form of compensation is payable for chickens who die.

You are responsible for any veterinary expenses discussed with you in advance. If we are unable to contact you despite our best efforts/due to time zones, in emergency situations, etc., we will not hold up treatment and will make a decision based on our own experience and that of the vet and you will be liable for the resulting costs.

Secure runs and coops

All boarders are kept in Omlet Eglu Cubes or Omlet Go Ups with "fox-resistant" runs. In turn, the coops/run are behind electric fencing. Before dusk, we are with the birds changing food/water and locking them away when they decide to go to bed. All birds are shut inside their coops at night. Even with these safety precautions, there is always a risk of predators. It would take an intelligent fox a long time to tunnel underneath the fox-resistant skirts into a run, but there have been cases online where they have succeeded in doing so.

Equally, whilst electric fencing deters foxes, it would not stop them if they are determined to get in. Birds can die from the sheer fright of seeing a fox trying to get into their run, even if the fox is unsuccessful in its attempt.

There have also been cases online where rats have entered coops and killed chickens.

There are cases of humans stealing birds.

Whilst we take all precautions – regular monitoring/electric fences/fox-resistant runs/timely lock-up at night/rodent prevention, attacks can still potentially happen.

We cannot be held liable for the death of boarders in the event of a fox attack/attempted attack, unless we feel we had been negligent in any way.

As the coops cannot physically be locked, we equally cannot be held liable for the birds being stolen.

All boarders are treated in exactly the same way as our own birds – with love and great care – and we would never knowingly put our own flocks at risk, but things can happen.