# Councils logged 519 rooster complaints last year as 1.5m backyard birds fuel suburban noise row



Feathers have been flying across towns and suburbs as homeowners report being driven to distraction by noisy cockerels. National press coverage of a Freedom of Information trawl found 519 formal complaints about roosters waking neighbours in the past year, and councils told requesters they often do not record poultry-related calls as a separate category, suggesting the official number may be an undercount. Industry data from the Pet Food Manufacturers’ Association puts household ownership of domestic fowl at roughly 1.4 million, a figure widely cited when commentators explain why poultry noise is increasingly visible in urban nuisance logs. According to the original report, many owners acquired birds during the pandemic and some more recently as a way to cut grocery bills. (In the press piece the PFMA figure was rounded up to 1.5 million.)

The distribution of complaints points to particular pressure points. The FOI summary identified Bradford as the area with the most logged complaints, followed by Birmingham, Manchester, Derby, Rotherham and Bexley among others, and several local authorities told investigators they cannot easily provide full breakdowns because animal noise is typically lumped together in their systems. That lack of granular recording makes it harder to build a clear national picture of how widespread roosters-as-nuisance really are, and it complicates efforts to design targeted local policy or outreach for new poultry keepers.

The rise in backyard poultry is not unique to the UK. Industry figures and news reporting show a clear pandemic-era boom in household flocks: hatcheries and breeders in both the United States and the UK were overwhelmed with orders in 2020 and 2021 as people sought fresh eggs, a hobby during lockdowns, and a route to greater food security. Journalistic investigations at the time described many first-time keepers purchasing hens and, in some cases, cockerels without fully appreciating the long-term commitment and practical constraints of keeping birds in built-up neighbourhoods. Trade bodies caution that survey methods shifted during Covid and warn against direct comparison with pre-pandemic face-to-face surveys, underlining some uncertainty in exact ownership totals.

Local authorities have tools to tackle persistent crowing when it becomes a statutory nuisance. Case law and reporting show councils can investigate complaints, collect evidence such as diary sheets and monitoring recordings, and serve noise abatement notices under the Environmental Protection Act; failure to comply can lead to prosecution and fines, as one high-profile Berkshire case demonstrated. Bradford Council’s published guidance sets out the typical process—investigation, evidence-gathering and, where appropriate, enforcement—while also offering practical advice to minimise crowing, including keeping birds indoors at dusk and dawn, siting coops away from neighbouring windows and using measures to keep housing dark at night.

Councils’ guidance and local journalism also illustrate that animal-noise complaints sit alongside a wide range of nuisance grievances—from loud music to vermin—and that officers routinely try mediation and practical remedies before resorting to formal enforcement. Local reporting shows complaints about poultry have featured increasingly in council logs in some areas, and environmental health teams often advise on both neighbourliness and welfare, stressing that any action should protect animals as well as people.

“It might sound trivial but these chickens and cockerels can drive people crazy,” said John Stewart, chair of the UK Noise Association, speaking to the press. His comment underlines the social friction that can build when rural practices come into close contact with suburban living: owners may value fresh eggs and companionship, while neighbours can be left enduring repeated early-morning disturbance.

The practical takeaway from councils, industry groups and past reporting is straightforward: prospective owners should plan for long-term care and think about siting and species (hens rarely crow; cockerels do), and neighbours who are disturbed should document incidents and engage local environmental health teams if informal resolution fails. Industry and local authorities both signal that the headline numbers are likely conservative, and they urge clearer recording and better public advice so the spike in urban poultry keeping can be managed with proportionate enforcement and sensible public guidance rather than neighbourly confrontation.

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## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2093289/homeowners-nationwide-complain-rowdy-roosters), [[2]](https://www.ukpetfood.org/resource/pawsitive-pfma-confirms-top-ten-pets.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2093289/homeowners-nationwide-complain-rowdy-roosters)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://apnews.com/article/pandemics-california-animals-coronavirus-pandemic-1a2e8fab7176ee9ad8e0a195d1951871), [[4]](https://www.npr.org/2020/04/03/826925180/we-are-swamped-coronavirus-propels-interest-in-raising-backyard-chickens-for-egg), [[2]](https://www.ukpetfood.org/resource/pawsitive-pfma-confirms-top-ten-pets.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-berkshire-17183373), [[6]](https://www.bradford.gov.uk/environmental-health-and-pollution/noise-nuisance/keeping-cockerels/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[7]](https://www.kentonline.co.uk/kent/news/from-chickens-to-children-what-are-the-noises-angering-ken-314479/), [[6]](https://www.bradford.gov.uk/environmental-health-and-pollution/noise-nuisance/keeping-cockerels/), [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2093289/homeowners-nationwide-complain-rowdy-roosters)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2093289/homeowners-nationwide-complain-rowdy-roosters)
* Paragraph 7 – [[6]](https://www.bradford.gov.uk/environmental-health-and-pollution/noise-nuisance/keeping-cockerels/), [[2]](https://www.ukpetfood.org/resource/pawsitive-pfma-confirms-top-ten-pets.html)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2093289/homeowners-nationwide-complain-rowdy-roosters> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ukpetfood.org/resource/pawsitive-pfma-confirms-top-ten-pets.html> - This Pet Food Manufacturers’ Association (PFMA) news page presents the organisation’s Top Ten Pets data from its national survey, reporting pet-population estimates and household ownership figures. The release summarises that dogs and cats lead numbers, and includes counts for indoor birds and domestic fowl, noting around 1.4 million domestic fowl (chickens) kept by households in the UK. The page explains survey methodology, sample size changes during the Covid period, and cautions about direct comparisons with earlier face-to-face surveys. It is a primary industry statistic often used to quantify the recent growth in backyard poultry ownership.
3. <https://apnews.com/article/pandemics-california-animals-coronavirus-pandemic-1a2e8fab7176ee9ad8e0a195d1951871> - This AP News feature examines how the Covid-19 pandemic fuelled a surge in interest for backyard chickens across the United States, reporting hatcheries and breeders overwhelmed by orders and many new keepers beginning flocks for eggs, self-sufficiency and companionship. It quotes breeders and industry representatives describing dramatic rises in demand, and explains practical and welfare considerations for novice chicken owners. The article places the boom in the context of pandemic-related supply fears and lockdown lifestyles, illustrating the worldwide pattern — including parallels in the UK — where households acquired hens during Covid to secure food and occupy time at home.
4. <https://www.npr.org/2020/04/03/826925180/we-are-swamped-coronavirus-propels-interest-in-raising-backyard-chickens-for-egg> - This NPR report from early in the Covid-19 pandemic documents the sudden, widespread increase in demand for backyard chickens in the United States, quoting hatchery owners who describe being ‘‘swamped’’ with new customers. The story explains motivations behind the trend — securing eggs, occupying children and families during lockdown, and a desire for self-sufficiency — and notes that many buyers were first-time chicken keepers. It also outlines practical challenges for new owners and stresses that keeping poultry is a long-term commitment, thereby supporting claims that pandemic lockdowns contributed to a rise in household chicken-keeping.
5. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-berkshire-17183373> - This BBC News piece reports a legal case in which a homeowner in Berkshire was fined after their cockerels’ crowing repeatedly disturbed neighbours. The article describes monitoring evidence gathered by council officers, recorded instances of frequent crowing, and the use of a noise abatement notice under the Environmental Protection Act. It explains that councils investigate such complaints and can prosecute non-compliance, illustrating how crowing cockerels can be treated as statutory nuisances. The BBC article demonstrates real-world council action and fines, corroborating claims that roosters kept in built-up areas sometimes provoke formal complaints and enforcement.
6. <https://www.bradford.gov.uk/environmental-health-and-pollution/noise-nuisance/keeping-cockerels/> - Bradford Council’s official guidance page explains the council’s approach to keeping cockerels and other poultry in urban areas, noting that crowing can lead to complaints about noise, odour and vermin. It sets out investigative steps the environmental health team will take, including diary sheets, monitoring and possible noise abatement notices under the Environmental Protection Act, and offers practical advice for minimising crowing (darkened coops, housing at night, siting away from neighbours). The page evidences that local authorities record and respond to poultry noise complaints and provides an authoritative municipal viewpoint on nuisance procedures.
7. <https://www.kentonline.co.uk/kent/news/from-chickens-to-children-what-are-the-noises-angering-ken-314479/> - This KentOnline article surveys noise complaints received by Kent councils, highlighting a wide range of nuisances from loud music to animal noise and noting specific counts for animal-related reports, including cockerels and chickens. It discusses how councils log complaints, the commonality of animal noise grievances and the tools authorities use to investigate and resolve disputes. The piece illustrates that local authorities do record noise complaints about poultry and that such reports have been rising, supporting the broader claim that homeowners have been lodging numerous complaints to councils about noisy chickens and cockerels in recent years.