



### **INFORMATION LEAFLET – ADVICE ON PEAFOWL (PEACOCKS)**

Peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*) are members of the pheasant family, and the national bird of India. The word peacock actually refers to the male bird, while females are peahens, and the young are peachicks. A group of these together is referred to as an ostentation or muster of peacocks, usually one male with up to five females. While the peacock is a wild bird by nature, they have been domesticated in many countries.

The peafowl's natural habitat is woodland and forest though in the wild they adapt well to different environments. The peafowl natural diet consists of worms, insects, small snakes and reptiles, small mammals, berries, grain and seed.

The peacock (male peafowl) form leks, groups of small territories each owned by one male. The males display their amazing plumage for any female that visit the lek, making it fairly easy for a female to assess several males before choosing one to mate with. In the breeding season (April to September) the cock becomes solitary and combative. He calls loudly to advertise his presence to hens, and he defends his territory from younger male rivals.

After mating, the female leaves the family group and hides a nest in tall grass, and lays five to seven eggs. She incubates the eggs for about 28 days and cares for the chicks for about 7 to 9 weeks. They normally lay one clutch of eggs per year. In captivity peafowl can live up to 15 years, some have been recorded living as long as 30 years.

### **THE PROBLEM WITH PEAFOWL**

We receive periodic complaints about peacocks either being kept as pets at residential premises or straying from these the premises on to neighbour's premises. Peacocks inevitably stray from their premises if they are unrestrained and then could be classified as 'stray animals'. Sometime peacocks are apparently not owned by anyone and in such cases they may be regarded as wild animals. Guernsey's 2012 Animal Welfare Ordinance provides protection for all animals including pets, strays and wild animals.

- Peacocks can be noisy; they have a very loud high-pitched 'meow' or 'hellooo' call. They call a lot during the breeding season. Dawn and late evening is a favourite time for this.
- Peacocks tend to wander and when people get them, they often don't realise there's a process you need to go through to get them to stay in a particular area, although this can often be unsuccessful.
- Peafowl like to roost in trees and will commonly go looking for a suitable one, often this outside of the owner's area. They will also roost on the ridges of roofs where they can cause damage.
- Peafowl for some reason are fond of cars and enjoy standing on them. They will also attack their reflection in cars and cause damage by scratching and pecking shiny bodywork, windows and door mirrors.
- Peafowl will often dig up flowerbeds and cause damage to gardens while foraging for food.

## **PEAFOWL AND THE LAW**

### **PETS**

Peafowl are a non-indigenous species and most birds will have owners as they are kept as pets. As pets (animals kept by man for interest, as a hobby or for companionship), they are protected by the Guernsey's 2012 Animal Welfare Ordinance.

### **STRAY PETS**

Peafowl that have wandered or escaped from its normal place of confinement and are not under the supervision or control of its owner or keeper are stray animals and may be seized and detained by authorised persons under Guernsey's 2012 Animal Welfare Ordinance.

### **WILD ANIMALS**

Those peafowl not apparently owned or living in a feral are classed as wild animals under the Animal Welfare Ordinance 2012.

### **ANIMAL NOISE**

The Office of the Environmental Health and Pollution Regulation (OEHPR) has powers to investigate complaints about noise, including noise from peacocks. In the event of a complaint officers will gather evidence to determine whether a statutory nuisance is being allowed to recur. Officers will endeavour to work with the animal owner should evidence show that there is a problem.

## **ADVICE FOR THE OWNERS OF PEACOCKS**

1. Peafowl are not really suitable to be kept as pets in residential areas. Guernsey is for all intents and purposes an urban and sub-urban environment so in reality peacocks are not ideally suited to the Island.
2. If you are considering keeping peafowl, remember the ideal scenario is a peacock (male) and 4 or 5 peahens (female) because in the breeding season males will become territorial and combative.
3. If you are keeping peafowl you should consider arrangements for appropriate re-homing/culling any young they may have, especially cock birds.
4. Dogs will often chase peafowl even if it's only in play, peafowl are easily stressed and there are many reports of chased peafowl dying of distress after being chased.
5. Unless your property has many verges of land, you should keep your peafowl fenced in to prevent them getting out onto roads or into your neighbours gardens, where they can cause damage or cause them a noise problem. Many people want their peafowl to roam free; however, this is not always a good option. If you have roads close to where you plan to allow the birds to roam, there's a possibility of them being hit by a car. Remember peafowl like to stand in front of and on top of cars, and may well cause damage to people's property and possessions.
6. Peacocks tend to make most noise early in the morning (first light) and late in the evening during the breeding season. If you live in an area where you have neighbours close by you are very likely to have a problem with noise complaints. Remember if a statutory noise nuisance is established you may be subject to formal legal action. If you feed them the same time every night inside a shed or building, you can then close them in for the night. By keeping the enclosure dark, this should help prevent them calling at dawn. Another tip is to set their perch at a height that prevents them raising their neck to call.
7. When introducing peafowl to an area don't let them out right away or they will disappear down the road! The best way to keep them on your property is to pen them where they can see the area where they'll be living. After they've been penned for a minimum of 6 weeks or longer if it is a peacock with a full tail, let the hen out before the cock bird, as the hens are more social and will stay around the birds that are still penned up.
8. If a stray peafowl comes onto your land or into your garden, do not be tempted to feed it. If you feed it, you will encourage it to stay, and you may be seen as the keeper, and responsible for its actions.