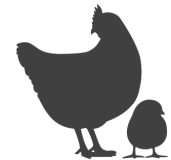


From registration to the quail accommodation accessories

KEEPING QUAILS IN A SPECIES-APPROPRIATE WAY - HOW IT WORKS



Even though keeping quails is considered uncomplicated and easy to care for, there are a few conditions and requirements that should be met. What space do quails actually need? How can quail accommodation be organised in a species-appropriate way so that the animals feel comfortable all year round? What regulations need to be observed? The following article provides answers to the most important questions about keeping quails and recommendations for optimal housing conditions.

Legal basis: regulations and laws on keeping quails

Both in Germany and in the EU, **there are only a few legal requirements** for keeping quails. In general, the general provisions of the Animal Welfare Act (TierSchG) and the Animal Welfare Farm Animal Husbandry Ordinance (TierSchNutzTV) apply. The latter primarily regulates the keeping of Japanese laying quails for commercial purposes (commercial keeping).

However, the wording in Section 2 TierSchG is so **general** that **legal guidance** is **difficult** to obtain. It is clearly regulated here that **keeping quails in cages** does not fulfil their basic needs. Keeping quails in cages is therefore **prohibited**.

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Anyone who keeps, cares for or has to care for an animal,

- 1. must provide the animal with appropriate nutrition, care and accommodation in accordance with its species and needs,*
- 2. must not restrict the animal's ability to exercise in a way that causes it pain or avoidable suffering or harm,*
- 3. must have the knowledge and skills required to provide the animal with appropriate nutrition, care and accommodation in accordance with its behaviour.*

§ Section 2 of the Animal Welfare Act (TierSchG)

Legal guidance is provided **by an expert opinion** commissioned by the staff unit of the State Commissioner

for Animal Welfare in Baden-Württemberg **with recommendations from a veterinary point of view.** **Japanese laying quails** (also known as Japanese quails) are domesticated, but are considered an **"exotic farm animal"** in Germany . For this reason , laying quails are **subject to authorisation in accordance with § 11 TierSchG**. Anyone wishing to keep laying quails should therefore obtain a licence from the competent authority and have the animals **registered**.



Quails need optimal conditions for good laying performance. This includes a sufficiently large enclosure with retreats, nesting areas and a place for sand bathing (©stock.adobe.com - Verena Timtschenko).

Notification or registration of quails with the competent authority

Registration or notification is carried out online - depending on the authority - by post, e-mail or fax. This requires the name and address of the keeper, the location of the quail accommodation, the date on which quail keeping began, the size of the herd and details of the animal species. The **number assigned** by the authorities identifies the keeper as the **owner of the poultry**. Once a year, a **follow-up report** must be submitted under this number with up-to-date information on the size of the livestock. The authority must also be notified of any major expansions or reductions in flock size and any change of residence.

In addition to the obligation to register or report to the competent authority, every livestock owner is obliged to **register** their laying quails **with the competent animal disease fund**. In the event of an animal disease, such as an outbreak of avian influenza, the animal disease fund is responsible for providing compensation and aid for preventative measures.

Quail housing: Requirements for floor space and minimum height

Japanese laying quails, like their wild relatives, live and move exclusively on the ground. In order to carry out their **natural locomotor behaviour** such as running, flapping, foraging, scratching and pecking, quails require a correspondingly free area. Therefore, the following recommendation applies according to the expert opinion

of the staff unit of the State Commissioner for Animal Welfare Baden-Württemberg: The **freely usable floor space** of the entire housing facility should be **at least two square metres** (two metres long, one metre wide) in accordance with the stocking density, i.e. the number of laying quails. **There** is also **no legal regulation** for the **stocking density**. However, taking into account the size, natural behaviour and individual distance of the birds, **no more than six quails** can fit **on one square metre**.

A minimum height of two metres is recommended for the enclosure. **All quail species** are fundamentally **capable of flight** and flying is also used as a flight response. To start their flight, the animals jump 1.5 to 1.8 metres into the air with a quick, powerful movement. A **minimum height of two metres** offers the quails reliable protection from possible injury even during such manoeuvres.

Requirements for quail accommodation: functional areas, equipment and accessories tailored to their needs

The **basic needs** of quails include **spending time in the fresh air** on the one hand and a **safe, protected retreat** on the other. The **feeding area and quail drinker** are just as essential. The **feed dispensers, automatic feeders and feed columns** available on the market make **feeding** and rationing **easy and convenient** for the keeper. They are designed so that the feed is accessible at all times, but is protected from contamination by litter or faeces. Feed dispensers also prevent unwanted scratching in the feed. The **quail drinker** ensures a sufficient **supply of fresh water**. Here too, there are various models on the market that are especially suitable for quails, such as inverted drinkers or nipple drinkers. These are both space-saving, allow easy filling and protect the water from contamination.



A well-equipped sand bathing area is essential for keeping quails. The animals use this several times a day to groom their feathers (©stock.adobe.com - KK-Fotografie).

Well-structured quail accommodation also includes **laying nests, hiding places** and a **place for sand**

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bathing. In addition, unlike chickens, quails do not need perches. In the wild, quails build their nests from grass, hay and small branches in sheltered, shallow hollows in the ground. For **undisturbed egg laying**, laying quails in domesticated husbandry require a **resting area** with **hiding places that are as protected from view** as possible , **such as caves, shelters or plant growth**, which are preferably located in the peripheral areas. The litter in these areas should be at least 15 centimetres deep for the construction of the **nest hollow**. The hiding places also serve as resting places for the quails and promote harmony in the quail group

For species-appropriate keeping, quails also need an area filled with sand or free-flowing dry clay for **sand or dust bathing**. The animals use sand bathing several times a day to **groom their plumage** and improve the structure of their feathers.

Either a **natural floor** or **loose, dry bedding** such as **short chopped straw, straw pellets, pine bark or spelt litter** is suitable as a **substrate Spelt litter**. Regardless of the nature of the substrate, the floor must be regularly cleaned of droppings. To allow the quails to **wear** their **claws** and **beaks naturally** , **stones or concrete** are recommended on around 10 % of the usable area.

Overview of housing systems - barn, aviary or enclosure

A closed room is used for **keeping quails in a barn**, the size of which depends on the number of quails kept. The **minimum** recommended **size** for up to five quails is 1 x 1.5 metres to **1 x 2 metres**.

A particularly common **form of housing** is the **aviary**. An aviary is a completely covered outdoor area about two metres high in which, depending on the design, one or three sides are secured with fine-meshed wire and the remaining sides are fitted with wooden boards, panels or other materials. The **aviary housing** offers the quails **plenty of fresh air at all times**, so that the animals can feel almost as if they are in the great outdoors. The aviary is also practical for the quail keeper, as it is **easy to walk in** and therefore **convenient to clean**.

An **enclosure** is an **area fenced off by a gate**, which can be positioned on a lawn or natural ground, for example, and can be moved again and again. However, this type of enclosure only offers the necessary security from predators and protection from the wet and cold in winter if it is combined with a barn, for example, and a roof prevents the quails from flying away.

Keeping quails on balconies, gardens and residential areas

Quails can only be kept in a stable, aviary or enclosure if they have their own garden or if a garden area is available for shared use. What to do **if there is no garden**? Provided the hutch can be well shaded in summer, it is also possible to **keep quails on the balcony**. The balcony must also be large enough to

accommodate a coop measuring two to three square metres.

If the **balcony** is part of a **rented flat**, the **landlord's permission** must be obtained beforehand.

Regardless of the ownership situation, **agreement** should always be **reached with the neighbours**. Even if quails do not cackle loudly like chickens, but only chirp quietly, the early morning quail call (mating call of the quail) can certainly be perceived as disturbing by neighbours. As a precaution, it is better not to keep cockerels on a balcony in a residential area, as some cockerels can be noisy. If permission is not obtained from the landlord, the landlord has the right to terminate the tenancy. And the neighbours have a legal right to refrain from keeping quails without prior agreement. It is also advisable to **consult with the neighbours** if **your garden** is located in a **densely populated residential area**.

Keeping quails in tenancies and in residential areas

Irrespective of whether quails are considered small animals and therefore do not require general permission from landlords and neighbours, the following requirements apply to the keeping of small animals:

- Small animals must be kept in closed containers (stable, aviary, cage)
- The animals must not cause any disturbance or nuisance
- The structure of the building must not be damaged
- The animals must not pose any danger
- The number of animals must comply with animal welfare requirements
- Commercial use is excluded

Differentiation - hobby keeping vs. commercial quail keeping

Anyone who keeps **laying quails** to **provide themselves with eggs** is **not** pursuing a **commercial purpose**. A **commercial purpose** only exists if eggs are sold beyond personal use with the intention of **making a profit**. The general requirements of Sections 3 and 4 of the TierSchNutztV apply to Japanese laying quails that are kept **for commercial purposes**. Depending on the scope of egg sales, a **business** must be **registered**. The decisive factor here is whether there is an "**intention to make a profit**". If the eggs are only sold to end consumers at cost price, no special licences need to be obtained. Only the best-before date must be labelled and, depending on the federal state, regular food inspections are carried out. The **sale of eggs to restaurants** or at **weekly markets** requires **prior business registration**. If not only the eggs but also the quail meat is to be sold, an official certificate of competence is required and an officially approved slaughter room must be available.

Laying quails in winter

Japanese laying quails are **hardy**, but in view of the animals' original origins, **protection from rain and wind** is at least necessary for species-appropriate husbandry. **Well protected** from **wind and moisture**, laying

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quails can withstand **temperatures of up to minus 15 degrees** without any problems. If you want your quails to lay eggs in winter too, you can use infrared or heat lamps as well as artificial light to stimulate laying activity. It is important to ensure that you do not expose the animals to temperature fluctuations of more than seven degrees.



Even though Japanese quails are hardy, make sure that your animals are protected from wind, moisture and excessive temperature differences (©stock.adobe.com - TwilightArtPictures).

Conclusion

- An official licence and registration is required to keep laying quails.
- Stables, aviaries or fenced enclosures in the garden are common and highly suitable forms of housing, while cage housing is prohibited for animal welfare reasons.
- The ideal stocking density is four to six quails per square metre.
- Good quail accommodation offers protection from the weather, free-range areas and places to retreat and hide.
- Feeding areas and drinkers (e.g. nipple drinkers) are essential to ensure a convenient supply of food and water.
- Sand bathing areas and functional areas such as feeding and resting areas are part of the basic equipment for species-appropriate housing in which the quails feel comfortable.
- Japanese laying quails are hardy and can withstand temperatures down to -15 degrees, provided they are protected from moisture and wind.

FAQ

Can quails be kept indoors or in a flat?

No. **We strongly advise** against keeping quails indoors or in flats. Just five quails produce more than 0.5 kg of faeces per day, which leads to a **significant odour pollution** in closed rooms.

How many quails can you keep on one square metre?

In Germany, there is no specific number that legally stipulates the stocking density for quails. An expert opinion commissioned by the staff unit of the State Commissioner for Animal Welfare in Baden-Württemberg **recommends** from a veterinary point of view **that no more than six sexually mature quails should be kept on one square metre.**

Can quails be kept individually?

No way! Quails are group animals. **Keeping them alone is not species-appropriate.** At least three, but preferably more, quails should be kept together. For beginners, we recommend a small group of five quail hens, which experience has shown to live together harmoniously and lay three to six quail eggs a day.

Can you let quails run free in the garden?

No, we strongly advise against this. **Quails are able to fly** and **are not considered to be territorial.** In addition, free-range quails are **easy prey for predators** such as dogs, cats, martens, birds of prey and rats.

Which plants are suitable for planting in a quail aviary?

Plants are generally a **great enrichment** for quails, as they often provide the animals with **natural privacy and cover.** Several plants are suitable for this, such as hazel bushes, hornbeams and thorn-free berry bushes such as raspberries, currants and blackberries. Taller growing grasses such as pampas grass or miscanthus as well as lavender and eucalyptus are also suitable.

The right food for quail

- **Laying quail food** (<https://www.deuka.de/en/pets/poultry/quailfood/>)
- **Laying quail mix** (<https://www.deuka.de/en/pets/poultry/quail-mix/>)

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