



Proposal to Amend Smiths Falls Animal Control Bylaw 8856-2016

Backyard Chickens in Non-Rural Zoning

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Presented on: 22 April 2024



Introduction

B.L.U.F.



Amend Animal Control Bylaw 8856-2016 to allow residents to keep up to 6 backyard chickens (no roosters). This can efficiently be implemented by adopting the same regulations on this matter as implemented in Carleton Place, albeit with a 50% reduction in their registration fee structure.



[Link to Carleton Place Bylaw 44-2021 – Backyard Hens](#)

Agenda

- Risks
- Benefits
- Municipal Precedents and Common Rules
- Conclusion
- References



Risks

- **Noise** – Myth. At 2 ft distance hens average 60-70 decibels (same as human conversation). Mitigated by the recommendation of standoff distances. A single dog barking is 80-110 decibels vs a rooster at about 90 decibels. Ban roosters not hens. Not required for egg production.
- **Waste/odor** – Negligible and minimized by the limitation of the amount of hen manure permitted to be accumulated (3 cu ft) and storage requirements (compost bin). A 40 lb dog creates approximately the same amount of waste as 11 chickens (0.75 lb per day) and is widely dispersed. Hen manure will be restricted to coop areas and is a valuable fertilizer that can serve to reduce usage of petroleum-based fertilizers.
- **Can attract predators/pests**– Negligible/false. Predators and rodents are already present in urban areas and are more strongly attracted by outdoor garbage storage, wild bird feeders, etc. Chicken coops will be rodent resistant preventing access to their food. Also, chickens serve to reduce insect pest populations such as ticks.
- **Coops are ugly** - Negligible. Most small flock designs are no less appealing than numerous properties found throughout the town. They will be required to be kept in backyards.
- **Negative relations with Neighbors** – Negligible. Hens are less bothersome than dogs which are prevalent. Provides an opportunity to build relationships by sharing eggs produced (legal to give but not to sell). Numerous anecdotes of neighbors being totally unaware of hens for years. Coops exist in this town now that are unobserved.

Risks

- **Carry diseases communicable to humans** (i.e. Avian Flu, etc) – Misunderstood. While possible it is unlikely due to isolation of backyard hens preventing contact with wild bird populations (no free range in bylaw).
- AVMA indicates the risk is low to caged backyard hens as they are not exposed to wild birds.
- City of Vancouver indicates in their backyard hen guide the risk of pathogen transmission from hens is mild and no greater threat than other animals permitted in similar bylaws, IAW guidance from the BCCDC
- Cooked poultry and eggs are not a viable method of avian flu transmission.
- Proper hygiene practices following handling of hens can reduce risk of transmission.



Benefits

- **Education aid** – biology and understand food sourcing.
- **Pest Reduction** – ticks and other insects.
- **More nutritious eggs** – fresher and can be stored longer. Increase of 2x vit E, 3-6x vit D, 66% vit A, 2-10x Omega 3. 30% reduction in cholesterol. No added antibiotics or hormones. Healthier constituency = reduced demands on medical system.
- **Decreased reliance** - on factory production and just in time delivery. Reduction in transportation requirements.
- **Natural Source of Nitrogen rich fertilizer** – Increased garden yields further combatting food insecurity
- **Better quality of life** for the chickens and owners. Sense of accomplishment, companions, connection to nature, etc.
- **Community building** – opportunity to share produce, showcase flock to children, etc.
- Some studies indicate early exposure to livestock **enhances human immune function** (Study by Ohio State University comparing urban children to Amish children)
- Further **increase the appeal of Smiths Falls as an alternative to larger urban centers**. Many people chose SF through pandemic as a way to escape the Urban jungle. This would serve as another way to reinforce that view for prospective constituents.



Benefit – Reduced biomass in Landfills

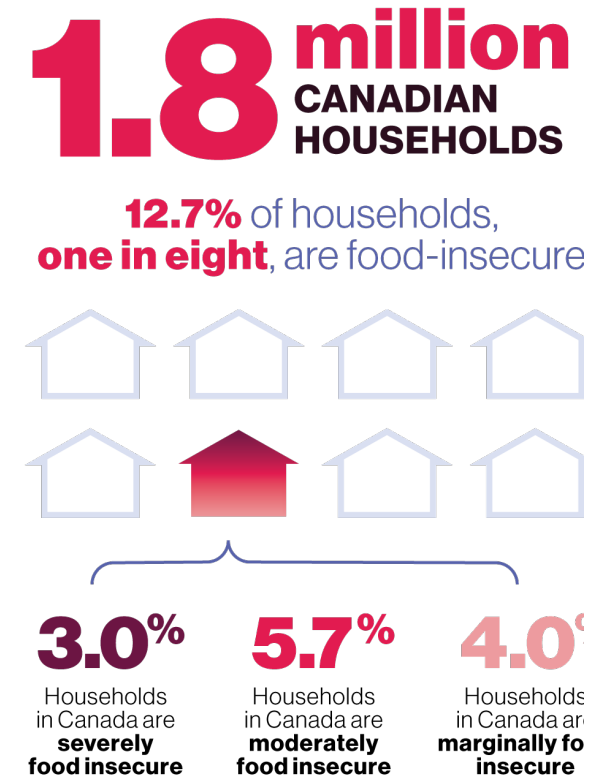
- Average Chicken can consume 6.9 pounds of food residuals/month = 83 lbs per year per hen ([Westchester University Study](#))
- If 1000 households had 6 chickens = $1000 \times 6 \times 83 = 498\,000$ lbs of diverted food residuals (249 tons)
- Assuming \$100/ton tipping fee that saves the town \$24,900.00 per year.
 - 2024 budget allocates \$868,025 for environmental services. There for a ~3% savings on this line item.
- US EPA states every 1000 tons of food waste produces 34 tons of methane gas → 8.47 tons of methane emissions reduced – [Link to Quantifying Methane Emissions from Landfill Food Waste](#)
- US EPA states Methane is 28 times more potent of a greenhouse gas than CO₂ -> 237.2 tons CO₂ equivalent removed – [Link to Importance of Methane](#)
- This offset of food waste has been corroborated by experiments conducted in Belgium and France.



Benefits – Reduce Food Insecurity

2020 Canada Statistics:

- Average household income:
 - Canada - \$54,450
 - Ontario - \$56,350
 - Smiths Falls - \$42,400 (22% below national average and 24.8% below Ontario average)
- Portion of total income made by pers over 15 in private households from government transfers:
 - Canada – 17.8%
 - Ontario – 17.1%
 - Smiths Falls – 29.9% (67.9% more than national average and 74.9% more than Ontario average)
- According to the Retail Council of Canada food prices increased 25.1% from 2018-2023.
- Canada's Food Report indicates an additional increase of 2.5 – 4.5% (totals 28.2 – 30.7% since 2018)
- Record demand seen for Ontario Food banks – Increase in demand of 38% seen in 2023
 - Smiths Falls is an at-risk municipality. Removal of barriers to self-sufficiency should be made where possible.
- Chickens lay 150-300 eggs per year and can be fed with little to no cost.



Municipal Precedents

- Carleton Place – Maximum of 6 hens permitted via a licensing program since 2021. \$100 initial fee and \$30 annual
- St. Thomas, ON
- Kitchener, ON
- Niagara Falls, ON
- Brampton, ON
- Waterloo, ON – Max of 4 chickens with annual registration fee of \$27.05. Approved in 2021
- Toronto, ON – Had operated on a pilot program that ran from 2018-23. No major issues encountered but cited cost to administer program and risk of avian flu (Note: AVMA cites risk to caged hens is minimal)
- Newmarket, ON
- Kingston, ON – Max of 6 hens with annual registration and neighbor notification (not approval). Program is more than 12 years old. Minimal complaints and typically just reporting of unregistered hens.
- Guelph, ON
- Halifax, NS – Tiered system on # of chickens based on land area (10-25 hens). Registration is optional and is free. Done to assess the long term impacts of the program. Rely on preexisting bylaws to simplify the process (i.e. Noise, dangerous and unsightly premises, etc)
- Montreal, QU
- Edmonton, AB
- Victoria, BC
- Vancouver, BC – Annual permit. Max of 4 hens. Even permitted on lots of multi-family dwellings

Municipal Precedents (Continued)

- Common and Significant Rules extracted from precedents:
 - No roosters and 4 to 6 hens permitted. Halifax permits 10-25 dependent on land area
 - No slaughter on property and deceased animals disposed at a livestock facility
 - Runs/Pens to be set back 1-1.5m from property lines
 - Not permitted in front or side yards
 - No sale of eggs
 - Tenants must get written approval of property owner
 - Only one coop per property even if located on a multifamily dwelling

Conclusion

- Many of the common risks associated to having backyard chickens are either false or exaggerated. Impact of a small flock is less than a household dog.
- Numerous benefits to chicken ownership:
 - Environmental
 - Health
 - Education
 - Community Building
 - Humane
- Smiths Falls is a town at risk of food insecurity, particularly in this period of inflation and potential scarcity of staples. All avenues of promoting self-sufficiency should be fostered to mitigate impacts.
 - War time economy?
 - Time for Victory Gardens?
- Precedent has been set, in many similar and larger towns, to great success.
 - Ease of bylaw development by piggy backing on those developed in Carleton Place, Kingston, etc.

Conclusion

- Request Council to Amend Animal Control Bylaw 8856-2016 to allow residents to keep up to 6 backyard chickens (no roosters). This can efficiently be implemented by adopting the same regulations on this matter as implemented in Carleton Place, albeit with a 50% reduction in their registration fee structure. \$50 initial fee then \$15 per year.

Questions



Reference Links

- [Halifax Rules and Guidance on Backyard Hens](#)
- [Carleton Place Bylaw and Registration of Backyard Hens](#)
- [StatsCan – Smiths Falls Profile](#)
- [Eggs Nutrition Comparison – Rutgers University](#)
- [Vancouver City Chicken Bylaw and Guidance](#)
- [Myths About Urban Chickens](#)
- [Kingston Rules and Guidance on Backyard Hens](#)
- [Smiths Falls Animal Control Bylaw](#)
- [Macleans – How chickens help Cities become food secure](#)
- [Ohio State University study on livestock impact on immunity](#)
- [Westchester University Study](#) - The Value of Backyard Chickens in Reducing Municipal Solid Waste
- US EPA - [Quantifying Methane Emissions from Landfill Food Waste](#)
- US EPA - [Importance of Methane](#)