Urban Agriculture: Livestock and Poultry

Growing your own food can be very rewarding and many people are looking at the opportunities they have right in their own backyards.

Vegetable gardens and fruit trees are already part of the urban environment for many people, but others are looking for more ways to bring the farm to the city. Some, for example, want to raise chickens in their backyards. This brings its own unique set of challenges for municipalities.

Here are some of the issues municipalities should consider before developing bylaws around keeping livestock or poultry:

**Animal Health and Public Health:** Livestock and poultry can be sources of diseases that are passed to humans. These animals require health management and veterinary care, as well as basic biosecurity measures, to minimize the occurrence and spread of diseases.

**Animal Care:** Basic hygiene is essential when caring for animals, who also need proper shelter, food, water and adequate space to stay healthy. Manure must be disposed of in a safe and environmentally responsible manner. But even with the best care, some animals will die, which means there have to be plans for disposing of dead animals.

**Predators:** Livestock and poultry can attract predators such as coyotes, rats, skunks, raccoons, foxes and neighbourhood pets.

**Food Safety:** Municipal councils should also be aware of provincial and federal regulations regarding food safety. For example, regulations under the *Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001* govern the sale of ungraded eggs.

While people are allowed to keep a limited number of chickens for egg production for their own consumption, producers can only sell their ungraded eggs for a consumer’s own use (i.e. not a commercial activity). The eggs must be clean and not leaking and sold only from the producer’s own premises.

The sale of ungraded eggs is also subject to Section 19 of the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* which allows Public Health Inspectors to seize any food that constitutes a "health hazard".

All meat and poultry sold in Ontario must be inspected by a meat inspector. Urban producers may sell meat only if the animals or birds are slaughtered at a licensed abattoir. In such cases, producers would have to comply with federal animal transportation requirements.

**Other Production Considerations:** A person is allowed to raise up to 300 broiler (meat) chickens or less than 100 layers per year on their premises. Larger commercial poultry and egg operations are subject to quota requirements under the *Farm Products Marketing Act*.

**Information on Backyard Poultry Flocks**
Additional information on backyard flocks can be found by visiting the websites of the following organizations.

**Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs**

The Ministry's website has technical information on general production and management of small flocks, as well as general information on food safety, animal health, animal welfare and biosecurity. The site also provides links to relevant legislation, including the [Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001](http://www.laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_01f20_e.htm), the [Health Protection and Promotion Act](http://www.laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90h07_e.htm), the [Animal Health Act, 2009](http://www.laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_09a31_e.htm) and the [Farm Products Marketing Act](http://www.laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90f09_e.htm).

"Keeping Your Birds Healthy - Biosecurity Basics for Small Flocks"

This initiative was developed by the University of Guelph, the Poultry Industry Council and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) to provide information and expertise to improve bird health and welfare and on-farm biosecurity. The website includes fact sheets on a wide number of topics including bird health, flock management, production, etc. Hardcopies of all resources can be ordered through the website or by calling OMAFRA's toll free Agricultural Information Contact Centre at 1-877-424-1300.

**Codes of Practice**

The [Canadian Food Inspection Agency](http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/animal/trans/infrac.shtml) and the [National Farm Animal Care Council](http://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice) have information on nationally developed guidelines for the care and handling of livestock and poultry on their websites.

**City of Vancouver**

The City of Vancouver, which has a bylaw allowing chickens to be kept in backyards, has extensive information, external links, and questions and answers on its website [http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/LICANDINSP/animalcontrol/chicken/index.htm](http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/LICANDINSP/animalcontrol/chicken/index.htm).

**Information on Urban Agriculture**

Two new certificate programs related to urban agriculture, the Sustainable Urban Agriculture Certificate [https://courses.opened.uoguelph.ca/public/category/courseCategoryCertificateProfile.do?method=load&certificateId=615989](https://courses.opened.uoguelph.ca/public/category/courseCategoryCertificateProfile.do?method=load&certificateId=615989) and the Sustainable Urban Horticulture Certificate [https://courses.opened.uoguelph.ca/public/category/courseCategoryCertificateProfile.do?method=load&certificateId=702165](https://courses.opened.uoguelph.ca/public/category/courseCategoryCertificateProfile.do?method=load&certificateId=702165) have been developed by the University of Guelph. Both of these certificate programs began September 2010.