

Backyard Chickens: Changing City Ordinance Chapter 6: Article V: Sec. 6-147

Goal: Change city ordinance Chapter 6: Article V: Sec. 6-147 “Any enclosure that houses fowl must be at least 100 feet from any dwelling other than the dwelling occupied by the owner of the fowl. A deviation from this distance may be considered upon the owner making proper application before the Zoning Board of Adjustment.” to read “... 50 feet from any dwelling other than the dwelling occupied by the owner...” and add that for 50 feet 6 birds, 75 feet 10 birds and 100 feet 10+ birds maximum are allowed.

Noise/ Behavior

Female chickens called “hens” are docile and moderately quiet at 70 decibels at 2 feet¹ and 55 decibels at 10 feet² compared to a dog’s bark at 90 decibels. Hens also are only vocal during the day and not at night when they go into the coop to roost. Other city noises that are generally well tolerated include lawn mowers(85-90 decibels) and garbage trucks (100 decibels).³

Sanitation

Sanitation of the coop and area where poultry are raised can be easily maintained by keeping water fresh as well as feed and manure cleaned from the living area. Chicken manure can be used in a compost and turned frequently to provide a rich nitrogen source to promote healthy landscapes. In comparison to dogs, which produce 274 pounds of manure in a year, the same as 6 hens which produce between 137 and 480 pounds of manure in a year.⁴

Poultry can be vaccinated for Marek’s disease, Newcastle disease and fowl pox can help reduce infectious disease within an urban flock.⁵



“It is very rare that viral diseases from chickens can pass on to humans, but there are plenty of bacterial infections that birds can transfer to humans,” he said. “It’s a matter of common-sense hygiene whenever you handle fresh eggs or tools used in and around the coop.” - Craig Coufal, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension poultry specialist and associate professor in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Department of Poultry Science at Texas A&M University.⁵



Benefits

Chickens being raised for their eggs or even just as a pet propose many benefits to owners and their communities. Chickens provide long-term food security and teach children and adults alike where their food comes from and how to care for animals that provide for them. Composting their manure adds to sustainability, healthy landscapes. Chickens also help reduce food wastes by eating kitchen scraps as well as provide pest control by eating insects in the backyard.

*Pictures of owners enjoying their chickens provided by local College Station, TX residents.

Other City Ordinances

Bryan, TX - 50 feet from neighboring residence

Austin, TX - 50 feet from neighboring residence

Dallas, TX - 20 feet from neighboring property line

Houston, TX - up to 30 chickens & 100 feet from neighboring residence

San Antonio, TX - 50 feet from neighboring residence.



Resources

¹The Brief on Chickens, Urban Farm Living (Jun. 2012) (“Laying hens—at their loudest—have about the same decibel level as human conversation (60 to 70 decibels). Hens are so quiet that there have been cases of family flocks being kept for years without the next door neighbors knowing it.”), available at [/www.urbanfarmliving.com/thebrief-on-chickens/#Water](http://www.urbanfarmliving.com/thebrief-on-chickens/#Water).

²Patricia Foreman, 7 Myths About Urban Chickens, MCMURREY HATCHERY BLOG (Jan. 25, 2011) (“The noise level of a rooster’s crow is about the same as a barking dog, 90 decibels. But there are ways to keep roosters quiet throughout the night. Many folks regard crowing as a pleasant sound.”), available at <http://blog.mcmurrayhatchery.com/2011/01/25/the-7-false-mythsabout-urban-chickens-myths-2-and-3/>

³Chris Erchull, A Hen in the Parlor: Municipal Control and Enforcement of Residential Chicken Coops, WESTERN NEW ENGLAND UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW (January 1, 2013) (“Other neighborhood noise problems are often tolerated by residents within a community, including the noise from lawn mowers,⁴² garbage trucks,⁴³ and even other birds.”) available at <https://digitalcommons.law.wne.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1000&context=writingcomp>

⁴See ERCHULL, *supra* note 3 (“The manure output of most residential chicken coops is minimal, with six chickens producing about the same amount of waste each year as one dog.”)

⁵Adam Raussell, Backyard Chicken Flocks for Beginners, AGRILIFE TODAY (April 1, 2020) (“It is very rare that viral diseases from chickens can pass on to humans, but there are plenty of bacterial infections that birds can transfer to humans,” he said. “It’s a matter of common-sense hygiene whenever you handle fresh eggs or tools used in and around the coop.”), available at <https://agrilifetoday.tamu.edu/2020/04/01/backyard-chicken-flocks-for-beginners/>