

# GUIDELINES FOR KEEPING URBAN HENS

## Understand City Bylaws & Relevant Legislation

**Animal Control Bylaw:** This Bylaw provides the guidelines, rules and regulations for the keeping of animals within the City of Campbell River. Available at: [www.campbellriver.ca](http://www.campbellriver.ca)

**Zoning Bylaw:** This Bylaw provides the land-use regulations within the City of Campbell River. Available at: [www.campbellriver.ca](http://www.campbellriver.ca)

**National Avian On-Farm Biosecurity Standard, Canadian Food Inspection Agency:** This is a provincial initiative that provides guidelines for the handling and keeping of poultry in Canada. It is intended to prevent disease-causing agents from entering or leaving a premise that houses poultry. Available at: [www.tinyurl.com/nk35lkw](http://www.tinyurl.com/nk35lkw)

**Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, R.S.B.C. 1996, C. 372:** This Provincial Act aims to increase protection for abused and neglected animals in British Columbia. It enhances animal welfare by requiring basic levels of care, and sets penalties for violating the act. Available at: [www.tinyurl.com/loc3vk5](http://www.tinyurl.com/loc3vk5)

**Guidelines for the Sale of Foods at Temporary Food Markets:** This document is prepared by the BC Centre for Disease Control and provides guidelines for the sale of shell eggs at temporary food markets. Available at: [www.tinyurl.com/cgd8e2q](http://www.tinyurl.com/cgd8e2q)

## Know How to Care For Your Hens

**Animal Welfare Requirements:** You must ensure that each hen maintains good health. Provide adequate food, water, shelter, light, ventilation, veterinary care, and the space to perform essential behaviours such as scratching, dust-bathing and roosting. Hen enclosures must be kept in good repair and sanitary condition, free from vermin, obnoxious smells and substances. Hen owners in violation of this are liable for municipal fines and may also be charged by the SPCA for violating the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act*. Violating the PCA Act can result in fines of up to \$75,000 or two years in prison.

**Cost, Time and Education:** Keep in mind that both start-up costs (such as infrastructure) and ongoing costs (such as vet care, food, bedding and medicine) will be required as hens can live up to 14 years or longer. Hens require care twice a day and will also require additional time for cleaning, grooming, feeding, parasite control, etc. You will also have to arrange for someone to look after your flock if you are away or unable to care for them.



### **RESOURCES:**

**How to Prevent Disease** - <http://tinyurl.com/nzbc4cc>

**Hen Basics** - <http://tinyurl.com/om8plk4>

**Basic Care** - <http://tinyurl.com/q4qyapx>

**Humane Treatment** - <http://tinyurl.com/ptu2v43>

**Diet and Nutrition** - <http://tinyurl.com/qclwncu>

**SPCA Hen Factsheet** - <http://tinyurl.com/otgvbzbzr>

**Canadian Code of Practice** - <http://tinyurl.com/nn7o4ud>



### **More questions?**

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## **Be a Good Neighbour**

**Noise Mitigation:** One of the primary concerns is that urban hens will make too much noise and disrupt the neighbourhood. To reduce the potential for noise pollution, roosters and any other type of fowl (such as ducks or peacocks) are prohibited in all areas except those zoned rural. Urban hens must be kept in their coops after sunset and before 7:00 a.m. to avoid disrupting your neighbours.

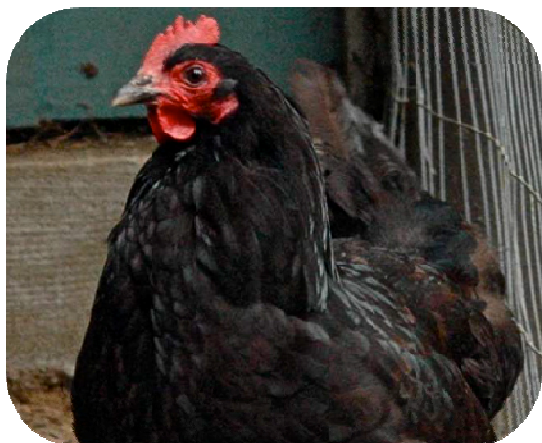
**Reducing Rodents and Other Pests:** To reduce the presence of unwanted pests, coops/pens must be constructed and maintained to prevent any rodent from harbouring underneath or within its walls. They must also be designed to prevent entrance from unwanted pests. Food should be kept indoors in an air-tight rodent proof container and leftover feed must be removed in a timely manner.

**Odour Reduction:** It is recommended to remove all manure and wet bedding weekly and ensure that a thorough, complete cleaning and disinfecting of the coop and its furnishings is completed at least once a year. The biosecurity procedures recommended by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency must also be followed. Manure that is intended for composting or fertilizing must be kept within a fully enclosed structure and no more than three cubic feet (0.085m<sup>3</sup>) of manure can be stored at a time.

**Chickens Running at Large:** Hens must be contained to your property within their pen/coop at all times. They are not allowed to run freely in urban environments. You are liable for potential fines and impoundment costs associated with chickens that trespass onto private or public property.

**Butchering of Hens and End of Life Disposal:** Chickens cannot be slaughtered on a residential property. Hens must be delivered to a pound keeper, farm, veterinarian, abattoir or other facility with the legal ability to dispose of them.

**Reducing Predation:** It is your responsibility to ensure that your hens are protected from predators and pests by providing a secure pen and coop, monitoring their health and hygiene and keeping feed in a dry and secure location. Wildlife (such as raccoons, rats, and bears) and domesticated animals (such as dogs or cats) can pose a threat to your hens.



## **RESOURCES:**

**Identifying Predators** – <http://tinyurl.com/oqubhpn>

**Identifying Predators and Pests** – <http://tinyurl.com/pzv5vex>



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## **Know The Rules and Your Personal Responsibilities**

**Mandatory Licencing:** You may not keep hens on a residential lot unless you obtain a licence as a hen owner from the City. This allows the City to confirm that you understand the regulation requirements and can help Animal Control Officers to find owners whose chickens have escaped from their coops/pens. This record of contact information also gives the City the ability to communicate with owners in case of an outbreak of disease. An inventory of urban hen owners enables the City to keep accurate information on local food production. Licences can be revoked for contravention of City bylaws. For more information refer to the Animal Control Bylaw.

**Maximum Flock Sizes:** Hen owners can keep a maximum of six chickens on properties in residential or Public Areas-1 zones provided that the placement of the pen/coop complies with property setbacks and meets the minimum size requirements. On properties that are zoned Rural 1, 2 and 3, and residential properties in the Quinsam Livestock Boundary that are 0.4 hectares (1 acre or larger), up to 10 hens are permitted per 0.4 hectares. Keep in mind that chickens are social creatures so a minimum of two is recommended.

**Ensuring Human Health:** The risk of pathogen transmission from backyard chicken keeping appears to be low and does not present a great threat to public health. Risk can be mitigated with proper hen housing as well as good hygiene when handling hens and eggs.

**Coop/Pen Placement:** The keeping of hens is treated as an ancillary use in residential zones. As such, coops/pens are required to meet the minimum setback requirements for ancillary structures as regulated in the City's Zoning Bylaw. Even if your coop is mobile, it must not be within these setbacks. As well, coops and pens must be a minimum of 3 metres from dwelling doors and windows.

**Coop/Pen Construction:** Both coops/pens and the yards that contain them must be fenced. Coops cannot be larger than 10m<sup>2</sup> in floor area and no higher than 3m. A minimum of 0.37m<sup>2</sup> in floor area and 0.92m height is required for each hen. Each hen requires its own nesting box and perch.

**Restrictions on the sale of meat and manure:** Urban hens can be kept as pets or for personal egg consumption. They are not intended to be used for commercial purposes. The small scale sale of excess eggs is acceptable provided that the guidelines for the sale of shell eggs, as set by the BC Centre for Disease Control's [Guideline for the Sale of Food at Temporary Food Markets](#), are followed.

**Manure Disposal:** A maximum of 0.085 m<sup>3</sup> (3 cubic feet) of manure can be stored on site in an enclosed container. Chicken manure cannot be disposed in the sewage, storm water or yard-waste collection systems. Small amounts of manure can be disposed of with household garbage, provided it is wrapped in a sealed plastic bag.

## **RESOURCES:**

**Chicken Coops 101** - <http://tinyurl.com/nwwofm8>

**Egg Handling** - <http://tinyurl.com/gfu4ocd>

**Manure Composting** - <http://tinyurl.com/pmsnz9v>

**How to Grow Healthy Chickens** - <http://tinyurl.com/opqll8v>



*Mobile chicken pens are often used to rotate chicken grazing areas.*



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## End-of-Life Disposal

The City's Animal Control Bylaw does not allow for the back-yard slaughter, burial, disposal of urban hens. Deceased hens must be properly disposed of at an appropriate facility. Carcasses that are improperly disposed can smell, attract insects and pests, harbour potentially dangerous diseases and contribute to water contamination. Burial is not considered a viable option, particularly in areas that have high water tables, unsuitable soils and dense human populations.

**Where to Dispose of Chickens:** Local facilities with the legal ability to dispose of chicken carcasses should be considered. Some farms, veterinarians and abattoirs have this ability. The 2014 rates for [Vancouver Island Animal Cremation](#) facility (Courtenay) in 2014 were general pet cremation for \$25 (under 15 lbs) or \$1.40 per pound (over 15 lbs). You may also want to bag and freeze your chicken to prevent decomposition prior to delivery.



Photo Credit: Rikki MacCuish, Sierra Club

**Garbage Collection:** Chicken carcasses are not permitted in the garbage or yard waste curbside collection. As a hen owner you are responsible for ensuring the proper disposal of your hens. You must also meet the *National Avian On-Farm Biosecurity Standard* as set by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

**Illegal dumping:** Disposing of chickens or carcasses on public or crown land could be considered illegal dumping. To report an incident, contact the Campbell River Bylaw Enforcement (250-286-5776) or the Conservation Officer Service (1-877-952-7277). You can also download the [TrashOut Mobile App](#) to record illegal dumps. In addition, the [Wildlife Act](#) mandates that any person who intentionally feeds, or leaves an attractant for dangerous wildlife be fined for their offence. A first conviction can result in a \$2,500 to \$250,000 fine or two years imprisonment. A second conviction can result in a \$5,000 to \$500,000 fine or three years imprisonment.

## Slaughtering Hens

**Your Options:** After hens have stopped laying eggs they can still be useful as family pets, back-yard pest control, natural fertilizer producers and kitchen-scrap consumers. However, if you do not want to keep hens that cannot lay eggs, you can arrange to have them slaughtered for food at a licensed abattoir.

**Local Abattoir:** According to the Ministry of Health, the closest abattoir that processes chickens is [Paradise Meadows Poultry](#) (Black Creek, BC). Its operators were contacted and confirmed that the 2014 rate was \$4 + GST per chicken.



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## **Health And Welfare Concerns:**

**Veterinary Costs:** If your birds become sick take them to a veterinarian, and if the disease is [communicable](#), report it to the local [Public Health Officer](#). Please contact the City of Campbell River as well so that other hen owners can be notified of the potential for disease, and receive tips on how to identify infected birds.

**Reporting Abuse:** To report an animal in distress, call the toll free *Animal Cruelty Reporting Hotline* at 1-(855)- 622-7722 any time between 8:30am to 6:00pm on weekdays and 9:00am to 5:00pm on weekends. If an animal emergency occurs outside of the call line's hours of operation, contact the local RCMP detachment at (250)-286-6221.

**Filing False Reports:** Be aware, intentionally providing false or misleading information is considered an offence under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act*.



## **RESOURCES:**

**How to Recognize Disease** – <http://tinyurl.com/pbn7z62>

**Six Basic Biosecurity Tips** – <http://tinyurl.com/o7krtop>

**Preventative Medicine for Backyard Chickens** – <http://tinyurl.com/pgqzbd>

**Six Winter Tips for Your Flock** – <http://tinyurl.com/q3qe9wo>

**Cheat Sheet for Raising Backyard Hens** – <http://tinyurl.com/ol6mlak>



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