
ZONING BYLAW REGULATIONS

- Accessory use conducted by a resident of the parcel – R1 & R2 Zones only;
- Consist of at most six (6) hens kept for personal egg consumption;
- Located in a backyard such that the dwelling unit is between the Backyard Hen Enclosure and the front parcel line;
- Coop is no larger than 8 square metres in floor area and no higher than 3 metres;
- Coop and Pen placed at least:
 - 2.5 metres from the exterior side parcel line, the interior side parcel line and the rear parcel line;
 - 17.5 metres from the front parcel line; and
 - 7.5 m from every road, laneway and public path
- No sale of eggs, manure, or meat or other products from the hens.

ANIMAL REGULATION & IMPOUNDING BYLAW

- Ensure each hen remains at all times in a Coop or Pen;
- Hens not permitted within a residential dwelling unit or on a balcony or deck;
- Obtain and maintain the permission of the owner of the property to keep hens, if the license holder is not the owners;
- Provide at least 0.37 m² of Coop floor area and at least 0.92 m² of Pen area per hen;
- Provide and maintain a floor of any combination of vegetated or bare earth in each Coop or Pen;
- Provide and maintain in every Coop a perch of at least 15 centimeters long and a nest box for each hen;
- Provide conditions sufficient to ensure that each hen maintains good health, including by providing each hen with food, water, shelter, light, ventilation, veterinary care, and opportunity to perform essential behaviors, such as scratching, dust-bathing and roosting;
- Construct and maintain each Pen and Coop such that it is secure from other animals and prevents any rodent from harbouring underneath or within it or within its walls, including but not limited to maintaining a 1m-wide (3 feet) rodent barrier strip using shale, gravel, bare earth or extremely short vegetation around the perimeter of the Pen and Coop, and ensure that it is free of debris;
- Ensure that all hens are kept within a locked Coop from sunset to sunrise;
- Ensure the timely removal of leftover food, trash and manure from each Coop and Pen;
- Store hen feed indoors in airtight containers that cannot be penetrated by vermin;
- Store manure within a fully enclosed structure in a manner that does not generate excessive heat or odour;
- Store no more than 3 cubic feet of manure at a time;
- Remove excess manure from the lot immediately, but must not deposit manure in the City garbage, recycling or organics systems, or the City sewage or storm system;
- Not slaughter or euthanize a hen on the lot;
- Not dispose of a hen except by delivering it to the Poundkeeper, to a farm, abattoir, veterinarian, or other facility with the ability to lawfully dispose of the carcass;
- Not bury a hen on the lot;
- Not keep a hen in a cage.

DISCLAIMER: The following information is not intended to be exhaustive; inclusion as a resource in no way is intended to represent an endorsement by the City of Duncan or a warranty as to the accuracy of the information or the quality of products or services listed on this page.

Humane treatment of farm animals is commonly defined by the “five freedoms,” as developed by the Farm Animal Welfare Council, an advisory body to the UK government. These include:

1. Freedom from hunger and thirst - by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
2. Freedom from discomfort - by providing a suitable environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
3. Freedom from pain, injury and disease - by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
4. Freedom to express normal behaviour - by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animals own kind.
5. Freedom from fear and distress - by ensuring conditions that avoid mental suffering.

To enjoy the five freedoms, hens need shelter, food, water, adequate space, environmental conditions (such as adequate ventilation and light) conducive to good health, and the opportunity to socialize and engage in fundamental behaviours, which for them include scratching (foraging by scraping the ground with their claws), roosting (resting on a stick or branch), and dustbathing (thrashing around in the dirt to clean feathers and remove parasites). The Animal Control by-law includes provisions to meet these basic needs. For more information on providing humane care for your backyard hens, consult the Canadian Food Inspection Agency at <http://tinyurl.com/nzbc4cc> or contact one of the organizations below:

HUMANE ORGANIZATIONS

- British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BCSPCA)
Cowichan & District Branch
7550 Bell McKinnon Road Duncan, B.C. V9L 6B1
(250) 746-4646
duncanspca@spca.bc.ca
 - United Poultry Concerns
<http://www.upc-online.org/>
 - Chicken Run Rescue
<http://www.chickenrunrescue.org/>
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GENERAL INFORMATION

Lifespan

- Chickens can live as long as a dog or cat--- up to 14 years or longer.
- Egg laying for a hen generally starts at 6 months old, peaks at 18 months and declines with age.

Cost

- Start up costs for coop, maintenance, tools, cleaning, equipment, heating / cooling appliances, dishes, nets, food storage, scale, fencing, security locks, lighting.
- Supplies per bird for food, bedding, nutritional supplements, cleaning supplies
- Vet care if your hen becomes ill. Consider exam fee, possible diagnostics, medications costs and other costs related to illness or injury.

Time

- 1 hour per day minimum for cleaning, parasite control, grooming, physical exam, travel time to purchase supplies, construction, repair, medication, feeding, supervise free time out of pen.
- Hens should be cared for twice daily. During the am to ensure food, water, and cleaning for the day and again in the evening to ensure adequate supplies for the evening and that all birds are securely confined overnight.
- Think ahead for vacations and weekends away. Do you have someone is able to care for your birds while you are away and knows about your flock and chicken health in case something goes wrong?

Location

- Coop and pen should be located in an area that provides shade, direct sunlight, good drainage and protection from prevailing winds and will not present a problem to neighbors.

Uninvited guests

- Chickens will attract bird mites and lice, mice, yard birds, squirrels, raccoons, dogs, coyotes, rats, and humans. You must ensure that your flock is safe both from predators and pests.

Companionship

- A single chicken is a sad chicken. Plan to have at least 2--- they are flock animals and need the companionship of other chickens. Generally, 3---4 compatible chickens can be well maintained in a typical city environment. Individual bird's age and temperament can affect compatibility. Over crowding chickens is the most common mistake. Sometimes single birds can thrive with a human friend if they have special needs.

Handling and Restraint

- Never handle a chicken by wings, feet or legs. Herd bird to corner using slow deliberate movement. Fast= predator, slow = less threat. Place hands over top part of wings (shoulders) and hold securely but do not squeeze. Pick up and hold under arm to keep wings in place. Support feet with other hand if bird will tolerate. To restrain for transport or examination, drape a towel over shoulders cape style and wrap around body.

Transportation

- Consider travel time and avoid extreme weather conditions when bringing home new hens. Heat exhaustion can develop quickly; interior car temps can reach a fatal point in 10 minutes. Medium sized hard pet carriers work well for security, safety and stress. Line with a towel, shredded paper or straw. Food is a good stress reducer. Offer wet food like greens or cucumber for long trips.

Bringing Hen Home

- If other birds are already present a 2 week quarantine in a separate area is recommended to watch for signs of illness and parasites. Avoid noisy, high traffic areas and allow the bird to acclimate before introducing to other birds, animals and family.
- The hens spend their days scratching for food, dust bathing, preening, playing and napping. Hens begin to lay eggs at about 6 months of age. Domesticated hens have been bred to lay one egg a day but by 18 month of age, egg laying frequency generally diminishes and many adult or senior hens stop laying altogether.
- Chickens are sociable, cheerful and intelligent creatures that can form lifelong bonds with each other and other species. Because of their keen intelligence and instinctive physical activity, they need a stimulating environment that mimics as much as possible the rich and diverse world nature designed them to enjoy.

COOP

Placement

- The coop needs to be a closed structure which provides shelter from cold, heat, wind, rain, snow and predators for protected roosting, nesting, feeding and watering space.

Construction & Materials

- Coops can be purchased ready made or in kits, constructed within an existing structure or built from scratch.
- NOTE: rabbit hutches, plastic igloos, dog houses and such are not appropriate structures.

Floor

- The floor should not collect and hold moisture, be easy to clean, retain heat in cold weather and exclude rodents/predators. A dirt floor draws heat away and is not easy to clean or rodents/predators proof. A wood floor is adequate provided it is at least a foot off the ground, insulated and sealed properly but is difficult to sanitize because it is porous. A concrete floor is ideal since it discourages rodents/predators and is easy to sanitize. Regardless of the floor type, bedding strewn on the surface is needed to absorb moist fecal matter and facilitate cleaning. Leaves or wood shavings work best and can be composted or easily bagged and disposed of as solid waste.

Walls

- Materials that are resistant to moisture and mold and easily cleaned are best. Chemically treated materials should be nontoxic. A good compound with anti fungal agents is good for humid areas. Clear varnish is also good. Everything should be treated or painted before it is assembled. Wooden structures should be draft free.

Roof

- The coop roof should be made of a material that will not collect and hold heat. The roof surface should be covered with an insulating tar paper to protect from heavy rains. The roof should be slightly inclined, to allow water to run off and if it overhangs it will protect from downpours. A few small openings along the eaves allow moisture to escape and provide fresh air.

Doors

- Doors for chickens should be just large enough for the largest bird and can be positioned anywhere from ground level to about 2 feet high with a stable ramp with cleats. Chickens are ground dwellers, not parrots---small doors at heights greater than 3 feet with flimsy, unstable ladders are not appropriate. Doors must be able to be secured against predators at night.
- Do not forget to provide easy human access to the coop so you can collect eggs and clean the entire coop.

Windows

- You may consider windows as chickens love windows and need natural light. Cover with 1/2" metal screen so they can be opened for ventilation in hot weather.

Roosts

- Lumber or branches can be used. They should be strong enough and mounted securely enough to hold all birds. The surface should be rough for good grip with no splinters or sharp edges. For medium sized birds, 2" or 4" flat or 1 1/2" diameter is best for foot comfort. The longer roost the better to prevent competition. They should be set 18" from wall, 2 ---3 feet off the floor. If mounted higher, rung steps are needed spaced 8---12 inches apart. The addition of a dropping board underneath and elevated roost will collect droppings and keep floor space below clean and inhabitable.

Climate

- If you provide heat for your hens you may consider only providing a heat lamp. If hens are kept dry and the coop does not have drafts your birds will not need much heat. Use caution when considering what to put in your coop as heaters and lamps can cause fire hazards. Your coop can have a lot of dust and combustible materials, from feathers, to feed, to straw. Your best protection is to build a coop and outdoor enclosure to keep your birds dry and free from drafts.
- On hot summer days you will need to think about keeping your coop and birds cool. You can do this by building your coop in a shaded area and keeping the surrounding area cool on hot days. You can do this by spraying down the coop, not the birds. You may consider providing a fan on very hot days.
- Chickens can tolerate quite a bit of cold weather. You will need to ensure that their drinking water does not freeze and that their coop is not drafty or damp.

Ventilation

- Doors, windows and vents near the ceiling supply oxygen, remove heat from breathing, remove moisture from breath and droppings, harmful gasses and dust particles, and dilute disease causing airborne organisms.

Light

- Natural light from windows and/or skylights should be provided. The minimum light intensity you should provide should be enough to clearly see the hens feed when standing over the feeder.

Feeders

- Food receptacles should be made of non--corrosive material that is easily cleaned minimizes spillage, prevents contamination with droppings and keeps food dry. The containers should be large enough for all the birds to comfortably eat at once or numerous enough to prevent competition or intimidation.

Waterers

- Water receptacles should be made of non--corrosive material that can be cleaned and disinfected with a solution of chlorine bleach, prevent contamination with droppings and is spill and leak proof. The containers should be large enough for all the birds to comfortably drink at once and hold enough water for all birds for an entire day. They should be slightly positioned higher than the feeder or far enough away to prevent contamination with food.

Nest boxes

- One nest box for every 2 -3 hens. Chickens prefer wooden nest boxes with covered opening for privacy placed on or as low to the floor as possible. If set higher they require a perch in front of the opening. They should be filled with 2 -4 inches of straw, litter or grass.

PEN

General

- The fenced area surrounding the coop that provides secure access to exercise, sunlight, earth and vegetation and is freely available to the birds when they are unsupervised during the day. It is constructed to prevent the bird's escape and prevents entry by intruders/predators.
- If the coop is elevated 2 feet so the chickens can use the space underneath, the coop and pen should not occupy the exact same footprint. Do not forget to provide adequate opening and space for a person to be able to clean the entire outdoor pen area and to be able to catch hens if needed.

Pen Floor

- Choose a well drained area. Material for the floor should be clean, non-toxic, biodegradable, readily available, inexpensive and replaceable. Since it will become compacted from little feet and contaminated by concentrated droppings and parasites, it will need to be raked out and replaced frequently to reduce odor and fly activity. Play sand, leaves, municipal wood chips, sod and hard wearing ground cover work well.

Fencing

- The type of fencing depends on what the most likely predators are in your area. Dogs, rats, raccoons, and coyotes are the most prevalent in city neighborhoods. It's best to build the strongest deterrents possible. Chain link panels or welded or woven fencing on a sturdy frame reinforced at the bottom with small mesh metal wire that prevents predators from tunneling under the fence will discourage most intruders. Regular inspection is key to security.

Cover

- The outdoor pen should be covered to keep hens in and predators out. Covering the pen with a roof such as corrugated fiberglass can provide shade and rain shelter.

Windbreak

- Providing a wind and rain/snow break will give the birds a protected area to be outdoors even in winter.

Shade

- Shade must be available and can be provided by vegetation or strategically placed materials.

Dust bath

- Taking a dust bath is the closest thing to heaven for a chicken. They bathe in the sun and in loose dry soil depressions in the dirt which cleans their feathers and rids them of parasites. Birds will usually dig their own hole for dust baths. If they are unable to dig their own dirt bath area you will need to provide one. Keep the soil in the dust bath loose and add play sand if it is a heavy clay soil. Adding a little poultry dust, diatomaceous earth

or wood ash increases the effectiveness of parasite control. Large heavy rubber feed buckets filled with play sand are a welcome addition to the indoor coop in the winter.

Enrichment furnishings

- Lots of large branches, stumps or platforms provide places to go and things to do and look natural and attractive in the pen. You can include bushes, boxes or other objects to sit in or hide behind. You can plant kale or other safe, edible vegetation around the outside of the pen for forage. Overcrowding, boredom and barren pens are the most common cause of behavior problems.

Nontoxic plants

- Chickens are inquisitive and voracious eaters of vegetation and many ornamental garden plants can be toxic to them. Learn which of your plants might be harmful and be sure your hens cannot reach them through the fencing.

PROVIDING CARE

General

- Fresh food and water are required daily and should be available at all times of day and night. Hay, grain and prepared feed should be fresh, less than one year old and free of mold, insects or other contaminants.
- Caution toxic: onion, avocados, chocolate, among other items
- Supplements: oyster shell or limestone
- For calcium, granite grit for digestion, mineral salt or ground salt licks. Chickens drink 1 - 2 cups of water a day. Feed should be stored in rodent proof containers in a cool dry area inaccessible to animals. Food that is uneaten or spilled should be removed from animal enclosures daily.

Social Needs

- Temperament and social structures of animals should be taken into account, and separate areas provided for incompatible birds.

Vet Care

- Locate a veterinary clinic nearby that will see chickens before one is needed—preferably one that specializes in avian care. Chickens are welcome in increasing numbers of city clinics.

SANITATION

- Manure and wet bedding should be removed from coop and animal feeding and lounging areas daily. Thorough, complete cleaning of walls and perches, removal of all bedding and disinfecting of coop and furnishings should be done at least once a year. If your birds have been diagnosed with an illness you will want to clean your entire coop and outdoor area before getting any new hens. Keeping shelter areas clean and dry will help prevent bacteria, fungi, insects, rodents, etc. Rodent levels will be minimized by keeping all feed in rodent proof containers and removing spilled or uneaten food promptly. Litter can be double bagged and disposed of as solid waste or composted but must be done in an area where chickens will not scratch for at least a year. Housing animals in spacious, clean and relatively dust free environments will keep them healthy and will minimize human exposure to infectious disease.