

# COUNCIL GIVES BACKYARD CHICKENS THE GO-AHEAD

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It's official — local residents will soon be allowed to raise chickens in their backyards.

In an 8-3 vote on Oct. 4, Halton Hills council approved the keeping of chickens within the urban areas of town, with a four-hen limit per lot. Councillors Ann Lawlor, Bob Inglis and Bryan Lewis were opposed.

This makes Halton Hills the first municipality in the region to permit backyard chickens. Town staff expect to have a licensing and registration program in place by the second quarter of next year (April-June 2022). In the interim, the municipality will freeze enforcement on those who already have urban hens.

The decision has been a long time coming, with

town staff first being asked to investigate the backyard chickens concept in September 2019. Since then, local residents have been surveyed twice on the topic, with over 1,000 responses being received both for and against chickens in urban areas. The results show that 64 per cent of respondents are in favour of permitting backyard chickens.

Around the council table, the councillors who support the initiative spoke about how backyard chickens will give children the opportunity to find out more about where their food comes from.

Councillors Clark Somerville and Wendy Farrow-Reed also pointed out that many people are already keeping chickens in their backyards.

"If we can get some control over it with education and guidelines, then good



Steve Somerville/Metroland

The town's backyard chicken licensing program is expected to be in place by next spring.

for us," said Farrow-Reed.

The councillors opposed to the urban hens raised concerns about diseases that chickens can carry, noise disturbances and the potential of attracting coyotes into residential neighbourhoods.

"In Ward 4, we are on (the) edge of the ravine. We have foxes, we have coyotes, we have raccoons that come into our urban area," said Lawlor. "By adding chickens, you attract them even more."

A staff report from man-

ager of enforcement services Susie Spry said while most municipalities that already permit urban hens have relatively low complaint numbers on the nuisance and unwanted wildlife fronts, "it is important for the Town to incorporate

strong education and regulation strategies to avoid or mitigate these concerns."

Town staff is planning an educational component of the urban chicken licensing program that will teach residents about safe handling to mitigate the spread of disease.

"We do want to create an online platform for residents with tools, information and guidelines so they are well informed and prepared to take on this huge responsibility," Spry told council.

Some of the rules around the backyard chickens being incorporated into the town's responsible pet owners bylaw include:

- The hens must be kept in a coop or run at all times;
- The structures have to be set back at least two metres from any lot line, and three metres from any dwelling on an adjacent lot;
- Food must be stored in rodent-proof containers and secured at all times;
- No roosters are allowed.

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