

## Backyard Chickens a Reality in Mundare September 7, 2010

Posted by gfsa in [Community Stories](#).  
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Have you ever wanted to walk out your back door and pick some fresh eggs for your morning breakfast? Well now you might just be able to do that. There are a growing number of cities and towns which have created bylaws to allow residents to keep a small flock of laying hens in your own back yard. Mundare, Alberta is one such town.

Recently the Town of [Mundare](#) passed a bylaw allowing residents to have as many as 5 laying hens. The only condition is that anyone interested in keeping a flock of hens was required to complete an educational course on backyard

chickens. I am an instructor for this course.

Whenever someone asks me what I do, I usually start the conversation with “I studied chickens for 10 years in University”. Our conversation then begins to turn toward the cool trivia that comes up when talking about chickens. In honour of Mundare’s new bylaw I thought I might share some of this trivia:

***Did you know that chickens have 3 stomachs*** all designed for slightly different jobs. The first stomach is the crop and it acts like a big lunch box after a bird eats a big meal. The second stomach is known as the proventriculus which is equivalent to our gastric stomach that secretes acids to break down food material. The final stomach is the gizzard which is an extremely strong muscle that works to grind food up so that it can be absorbed by the bird.

***Why are some eggs white and some brown?*** Each breed of chickens has a particular pigment in their shell gland which determines the color of the resulting egg. So both brown and white chickens can lay either brown or white eggs. There are even breeds of chickens which lay greenish to bluish colored eggs. Not to worry all of these eggs are equally healthy for you.

***How often does a hen lay an egg?*** A hen lays an egg roughly every 26 hrs if

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the conditions are right. Think about birds in the wild they will only lay eggs in the spring. Why is this? Birds lay eggs when days are getting longer to take advantage of greater food resources for new hatchlings and also warmer temperatures. Of the 26 hours it takes to make an egg 20 hrs are spent putting the nearly 3 – 5 grams of calcium on the shell.

**What came first, the chicken or the egg?** We will save that for another time... or email me for the answer!

Before getting your own backyard chickens check with your town or city to see if the bylaws allow laying hens. Do as much research as you can on the internet and ask friends who have birds for advice and tips. Lastly, make sure that you are ready to enjoy eggs that are out of this world!

*Submitted by Nick Wolanski, of Vegreville. Nick is a member of PLANTS (People Living and Nurturing Tomorrow's Sustainability) and RSAN (Rural Sustainable Alternative Network). You can reach Nick at [nickwolanski@gmail.com](mailto:nickwolanski@gmail.com)*

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### 1. [Rene Michalak](#) – [September 7, 2010](#)



Nice – looking forward to combining the birds and the bees for backyard sustainability!

Reply

### 2. [gfsa](#) – [September 8, 2010](#)



Thanks Nick, I love all the trivia. I was chatting with a group of urbanites last night and we were musing over the question of whether a rooster needs to be involved to get eggs for eating. If not, why do the hens even bother laying eggs?

Reply

### [nick](#) – [September 8, 2010](#)



Hi Angie. If I tell you the answer promise that you will not cast off eggs as an unwanted food. The yolk is actually what the female chicken contributes to mating if you know what I mean. The egg white is nutrition for the developing chick or human who ever gets the egg (egg white has excellent protein while the yolk is made up of triglycerides and is choked full of energy). Rooster are not needed for egg laying but you can eat eggs which have been fertilised as long as you get to the eggs before they have been incubated by the hen or a machine.

I hope this answers it for you without scaring you off eggs.

Nick

Reply

### 3. [gfsa](#) – [September 8, 2010](#)



Thanks Nick! And don't worry, you have not scared me off of eggs.

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### 4. [Tina](#) – [December 6, 2010](#)



How do I find out which communities and cities are allowing chickens in their backyard?

[Reply](#)

#### [nick](#) – [December 7, 2010](#)



Hello Tina,

The best way to find out if your community allows chickens is to contact your town or city council and see what the existing Bylaw states. I have looked into some of the cities and towns in Canada which allow chickens. Please note that the rules for each city or town can be slightly different. Here are the cities/towns in Canada that I know of Vancouver, Victoria, Guelph, Niagara Falls, Mundare Alberta. In some cities certain wards are sets aside for a pilot of backyard chickens. I know that Edmonton is trying to get this going but I am unsure of what the city has decided. There are a growing number of chicken clubs in Canada such as the River City Chicken Collective (Edmonton) or Canadians Liberating Urban Chickens Klub or CLUCK out of Calgary. In the United states hundreds of cities and towns allow the keeping of backyard chickens. A google search of what cities allow backyard chickens will reveal that even cosmopolitan cities like LONDON or NEW YORK allow backyard chickens.

Hope this helps Tina,

Nick

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