

Calgary woman fights for right to raise chickens

BY DARYL SLADE, CALGARY HERALD OCTOBER 6, 2009 2:02 PM



Mary March, with daughter Safree, at court on Tuesday after she pleaded not guilty to a bylaw ticket she received for possessing livestock in a prohibited area, namely three chickens in her backyard in the Highwood neighbourhood.

Photograph by: Daryl Slade, Calgary Herald

CALGARY - A mother of three is taking the City of Calgary to court over the right to have chickens.

Mary March, who has three hens in the back yard of her home in the northwest community of Highwood, pleaded not guilty at provincial traffic court on Tuesday to a bylaw ticket she received for possessing livestock in a prohibited area.

"I got the chickens so I have food," March, holding her one-year-old daughter Safree, said outside court after setting an April 1 trial date. "I have three kids and it's hard to feed three kids, everybody knows that.

"I guess (it's worthwhile), because I want other people to have food, too. We all have the right to a few chickens. There's way worse animals people have as far as I'm concerned: boa constrictors and dangerous pets like that that don't produce food."

March, who bought her chickens six months ago, is one of about 35 families in Calgary that currently raise hens for eggs. She was visited by a bylaw officer after she believed a neighbour complained, then was given 30 days to get rid of her hens.

When she didn't do so, she was given a ticket.

March is a member of CLUCK (Calgary Liberated Urban Chicken Klub), which agrees there should be a restriction on the number of hens allowed, such as six, at any residence.

Paul Hughes, founder and organizer of CLUCK who has five hens in the yard of his home in the southwest community of Killarney, said outside court he had no problems with his neighbours. He turned himself to get the ball rolling to fight

the bylaw.

"Calgary heritage is agrarian and we've completely turned our back on our agrarian heritage," said Hughes. "It's not cowtown, it's cowless town. In New York, you can have a cow and a chicken, based on reasonableness. You can keep an animal, if it's in a proper pen, you keep it clean and it doesn't fight anybody."

Hughes was also given a 30-day grace period to get rid of his chickens, which ends next Monday. But he said he, too, will fight the anticipated ticket.

"I get about a half-dozen eggs a day, which is suitable for a family," he said. "They live in a high-end condo, a really nice shed in the back yard. They have full run of a free-range area and it's extremely well kept."

March said she doesn't believe she has done anything illegal. She just insists she has the right to produce food.

"I wouldn't want anyone to have more than six chickens," she aid. "I mean, dogs smell if you don't clean up after them. It's just like any other animal. It's a matter of responsible ownership."

dslade@theherald.canwest.com

© Copyright (c) The Calgary Herald

Previous

Next

Mary March, with daughter Safree, at court on Tuesday after she pleaded not guilty to a bylaw ticket she received for possessing livestock in a prohibited area, namely three chickens in her backyard in the Highwood neighbourhood.

Photograph by: Daryl Slade, Calgary Herald

