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Chicken charges chucked

By **BILL KAUFMANN, CALGARY SUN**

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Calgary's foremost chicken farmer isn't clucking over the city's decision to scratch a bylaw ticket for keeping the birds.

But while Paul Hughes said he'd prefer to challenge in court the wider prohibition of raising food in the city, he admits he's feeling less hen-pecked by the move to tear up the ticket issued last month.

"It's our right to food and I really do believe there's a strong case here...maybe I'll have to get goats," said Hughes, president of the Calgary Liberated Urban Chicken Klub (CLUCK).

"I thought we were in a bit of a war, but (city bylaw boss) Bill Bruce has been working really hard on this."

Fellow chicken-keeper Mary March — who's been raising hens behind her Tuxedo home — has also had her seven-month-old bylaw charge withdrawn.

Earlier this month, a six-month urban egg production pilot project was announced, with Hughes saying 40 families will participate.

The city's Bruce said it only makes sense to quash the charges to create an atmosphere of good faith.

"If we're going to sit at the table and have an open dialogue about this you can't have this hanging over your head," said Bruce.

Canadian bylaws banning urban food production date back to the 1950s, said Bruce, and could well be outdated.

But he said there's no looking ahead to anything other than egg production for personal consumption.

"There'll be no cow in your back yard giving you milk," he said.

Hughes said the model he's using in his Killarney back yard — six chickens and no roosters — could be the used as a maximum bird count.

A report is expected to go to city council in early 2011.

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