



Waterloo resident puts chickens in the coop

Advocate of urban hens isn't waiting for a bylaw to pass

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WATERLOO

Waterloo council probably won't decide until the fall whether to allow chickens in city backyards.

But the Waterloo Hen Association will keep pecking away at the cause.

Waterloo has no bylaw that says residents can or cannot raise urban hens. Matthew Bailey-Dick, founder of the hen association, hopes the city will agree to some guidelines, so those who want to raise chickens can do so without annoying the neighbours. "We've got to work together," he said.

Not that Bailey-Dick is waiting for permission to keep chickens. He's looking after the hen association's newest ambassadors. They're housed in a small portable coop in his yard on William Street, sandwiched between the flowers and the herbs. The hens, Zacheus and BockBock, are on loan from a farm outside the city.

Bailey-Dick doesn't want urban dwellers to get in a flap over the noise and the smell from backyard coops.

"They think of chickens, and they think of cock-a-doodle doodling and all kinds of barnyard animals," he said.

He wants to make it clear the hen association, which has about 140 members, is recommending flocks of fewer than 12 chickens -- with no roosters.

"We're looking for egg production," he said, pulling a light brown egg and a pale blue egg out of the nest.

The portable coop has a small, fenced-in run, where the hens can graze in grass, and an enclosed space to keep them safe and secure from predators at night.

Josie Winterfeld's kitchen window looks right out over the coop.

She can't hear them from inside the house and only rarely hears them clucking when she's outside.

"I love having them next door," she said. "I would consider having chickens myself. I absolutely love the taste of fresh eggs."

Shazaad Subhanally knew his neighbours were keeping chickens but he has never heard or smelled them.

"I mean, if they had 500 chickens, it would be a problem," he said.

"Five, six chickens? No worries."

He grew up with chickens around, and doesn't think it's any different than people who keep several dogs.

But Bailey-Dick has no concerns that hens will become as popular as man's best friend.

"I've talked to several people who are supporting this but don't want chickens themselves," he said.

Bailey-Dick will turn an existing shed on his property into a coop if council approves urban chickens.

Zacheus and BockBock are safe in his backyard for now.

David Calder, general manager of corporate services for the city, is collecting input on the chicken proposal.

Staff will report to council in the fall.

"We're not going to come and take their chickens away at this point," he said.

Waterloo residents can voice their opinions about animal control at a public meeting Tues., June 24, from 7 to 9 p.m. at RIM Park.

The meeting will deal with several issues, including chickens, licensing of cats and limiting the number of animals per household.

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MATHEW MCCARTHY, RECORD STAFF



Mathew McCarthy, Record Staff
Kitchener, Ontario - Monday Jun 9, 2008 - Matthew Bailey-Dick next to his backyard chicken coop where he keeps two birds, Monday. Mathew McCarthy, Record staff



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