

Will the sky fall for these little chickens?

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By [Kris Scheuer](#)

If you see Clucky, Sally and Hybie crossing the road, these chickens are trying to get to their home on the other side of a midtown road.

Truth is these hens are unlikely to get out as their owner keeps them safe in her backyard, but they can't rest easy as it is illegal for them to live in Toronto.

"I am an outlaw," the midtown resident told *The Town Crier* on the condition of anonymity. "I could go on keeping my chickens. My neighbours are fine with it. But I feel we should go out on a limb. I just want to pick my timing."

In the meantime she's staying anonymous and keeping her chickens within the confines of her urban backyard and an "eggloo" where they lay eggs almost daily.

On June 5, she invited *The Town Crier* to meet the hens. Over the course of 90 minutes the chickens could barely be heard except for an occasional low cluck. Also missing was the tell-tale stench of chicken manure.

She never planned to raise chickens.

Last July while staying in Orangeville she wanted hens to lay fresh eggs and found the trio at Everdale Organic Farm and Learning Centre.

If she'd given the chickens back when she went home they would have been processed for food so she brought them to Toronto.

"I thought I had no alternative. At the time, I didn't know it wasn't legal to have chickens in Toronto," she says.

Chickens are not specifically mentioned in the city's prohibited animal bylaw they fall under the Galliformes category and are not allowed, says Eletta Purdy, manager of Toronto Animal Services.

"The bylaw was passed in 1999. So ignorance of the law isn't an excuse," says Purdy.

If bylaw officers come across someone keeping prohibited animals the person may be given time to make alternate arrangements or fined \$240.

"When you live in a highly urban environment, there isn't much space between residents. So generally it's not a good setting for farm animals ... so we put limitations in place," says Purdy.



FUGITIVE BIRDS Clucky, Sally and Hybie spend their days laying eggs and hiding from the law in an undisclosed midtown location.

Her suggestion is to obey the law.

“If she wants to see a change in the bylaw. She should come forward to her councillor.”

The midtown resident lives in Councillor Joe Mihevc’s ward.

“There are several good reasons not to review the bylaw. The smell and the roosters yodel in the morning,” Mihevc says. “On the other side, yes we should start to look at conditions of which (flexibility) might be possible.”

But he hasn’t had any requests to reopen debate on the bylaw.

For the woman with the chickens, homegrown eggs is a fringe benefit.

“The last time I bought eggs was last July,” she says. “There’s such a difference in taste and quality.”

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