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By Amanda Persico | Dec 30, 2010 - 8:05 AM | 5 | Report a Typo or Correction

### Chicken fight drags into new year

It's a cluck cluck here and a bylaw there. Here a fine, there a fine, everywhere a coop-block.

This year saw the rise in popularity of back yard chickens and urban farming, which led to a henhouse battle.

This spring, Mount Albert resident Jason Froats was ticketed by an East Gwillimbury bylaw enforcement officer for having five hens in his back yard coop.



Back yard chicken fight drags into new year. Mount Albert resident Jay Froats, his wife, Lori, and their daughter, Nia, are battling for the right to keep chickens in their back yard.

What started as a move to control what his family eats spun into a legal battle with Mr. Froats facing unknown charges.

"Since I told the bylaw officer I was planning on fighting whatever charges were thrown at me, there was no fine issued," he said.

"Instead, I received only a summons to appear in court."

If convicted of being in possession of illegal chickens, a fine will be issued at the justice of the peace's discretion.

His court date is April 19 at 9 a.m. at the Tannery Mall courts.

"I consider eggs a food staple," said Mr. Froats, who founded the York Region branch of the Canadian Liberated Urban Chicken Klub, or CLUCK for short.

"Food and food choice is part of a standard of living and is a universal human right. I have a right to feed my kids nutritious food the way I see fit."

According to the town's bylaws, chickens are prohibited on properties less than 0.8 hectares, unless the zoning is changed from residential to agriculture.

Not only will Mr. Froats have to challenge the zoning of his property, he will also have to challenge the town's official plan. And that's a slow process involving public meetings, town staff reports and an extensive land-use review.

But this hen fight didn't stop at the East Gwillimbury border.

Aurora resident Christa Gampg made a presentation to council on the benefits of keeping chickens, but her proposal stopped there.

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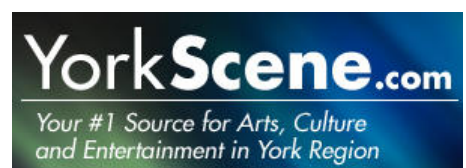
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Come the new year, Mr. Froats plans to table a motion before East Gwillimbury council to allow for up to five hens per family in a controlled and sanitary way.

He is also in the process of gaining local support with a petition in local retail shops as well as an online petition.

In recent months, there have been more than 300 municipalities across North America that have dissolved or modified urban poultry bylaws, including New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston, Vancouver, Guelph, St. Catharines, Calgary and Ottawa.

"This is about more than just chickens," Mr. Froats said.

"It's about food choice and decided what I feed my family."

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