

Bakersfield Urban Backyard Hens

"The Pet with Benefits"

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Facebook: City of Bakersfield Backyard Chicken Initiative

1. Executive Summary Statement

Our goal is to work collaboratively and respectfully with the residents, community stakeholders, and City Council of Bakersfield to expand the current ordinance to allow for zone R-1 to legally own backyard hens. Many citizens are in agreement and are actively letting City Council know that they want to be able to maintain a small flock of backyard hens as pets. This simple request has many benefits that far outweigh possible concerns. Any concerns are easily addressed with education, facts and examples of real-life conditions that currently exist.

2. Background Information

"Bakersfield Urban Backyard Hens" was established in March of 2020 to support the efforts of the Facebook page, "City of Bakersfield Backyard Chicken Initiative". Both of these groups have grown exponentially over the last several months indicating a city-wide interest with this topic. Once the City Council expands the ordinance to allow the R-1 zone to have hens, the website's focus will turn its attention to being an ongoing resource and place of support for the hen enthusiast community of Bakersfield.

3. Description of Current Services

Bakersfield Urban Backyard Hens is already a service to the community by:

- Sharing factual information regarding city code and ordinances
- Directing potential home buyers to locations that allow for hen ownership
- Support for the relocation and placement of hens
- Building community partnerships with organizations, businesses, and people
- Fostering a community of hen enthusiast while providing education on hen topics

4. Concluding Statement

The culture and practice of Bakersfield is already one of backyard hen ownership acceptance. It is time for the City of Bakersfield to align its ordinance with the will of its residents. Also, backyard hen ownership is good for Bakersfield's image as a progressive city with a healthy mindset that is focused on quality of life activities.

On the following pages you will find:

- The benefits and explanations of hen ownership for the urban resident (page 2)
- The counter points to possible concerns (page 3)

The Benefits of Backyard Hens

Fresh Nutritious Eggs: Eggs are so nutritious that they are often referred to as "nature's multivitamin". Eggs contain protein, unique antioxidants and powerful brain nutrients.

Bio-Recyclers and Zero Waste Partners: The most economic and politically compelling reason for backyard hen ownership is to employ chickens to bio-recycle kitchen, garden and yard "waste". Encouraging the use of hens as biomass recyclers is an expense-cutting opportunity to slash the amount of funds spent on managing trash that has to be picked up, transported, often transferred, and disposed of. Hens save the city money.

Hens Eat Bugs: Hens catch and eat all sorts of insects. Here are some bugs hens love to eat: ants, beetles, caterpillars, centipedes, cockroaches, grasshoppers, grubs, moths, mosquitoes, slugs, termites and spiders. Hens are omnivores. They eat both plants and meats.

Fertilizer and Compositing: Hen manure is among the most prized of manures. It is a desirable fertilizer for a garden. It is seen as an asset and not as a liability.

Food Security: Food security concerns are not only important for the food-insecure and resource-poor populations. The concept of food security is a serious topic for a wide range of Bakersfield residents. Backyard hens can and do contribute to a reliable, nutritious, food source.

Family Pets: Chickens are great companions because they are smart, entertaining and affectionate. As a pet owner you learn and value their individuality. A hen can learn to recognize its own name, and the names of hens in its flock. Hens and their hatchlings converse through the shell, allowing chicks to recognize their mother's voice. Hens make great family pets.

Child Involvement: Hens are hardy. They are easy to care for. They are inexpensive to maintain. These qualities make hens great pets for people of all ages, especially children. Raising backyard hens is an opportunity for children to take on responsibilities (chores), to learn about new things (education), and to practice empathy.

Stress Relief: Hens are calming. The little noises they make and the manner in which they walk about are two examples of hens' activities that help people destress and relax. Hens will allow you to hold and pet them. Hens are no different than a pet dog in this manner.

Healthy Hobby: Being a hen owner and enthusiast has many qualities that make it a healthy hobby. They include: being outside, caring for another living animal, fellowship with the backyard hen community, and healthy eating. It turns out that hen ownership is a gateway activity to other healthy endeavours such as gardening and cooking.

Therapeutic Pets: Hens' personalities and character traits make them excellent therapeutic animals. They are especially beneficial with these ailments: depression, anxiety, dementia, loneliness and autism. Hen therapy is used in nursing homes to calm and elicit emotions while creating opportunities for interactions and communication with elderly residents.

Easy To Care For and Maintain: Hen care is simple. Proper feed, a dry, protected coop, and access to clean water is what is needed. The simplicity of taking care of a small flock of backyard hens is why they are such a popular and successful pet.

Inexpensive to Own: Being that hens are an inexpensive pet to purchase, feed, and maintain makes them a pet that all socioeconomic groups can enjoy. Factory in the egg production, pest control, and possible composted soil, and many believe hens are the pet that pays them.

Counter Points To Opposing Backyard Hens

1. "Hens are smelly."

Hens do not smell bad. They have the same smell as other pets that are loved and cared for. A properly clean hen coop has no objectionable odors. If a hen coop is neglected it might begin to smell. The same is true of a cat box that is seldom cleaned, a dog kennel that is neglected, or a dog's poop can that is rarely emptied. Responsible people give their pets proper care and provide them with a clean environment, thus, no smell. Chickens are no different from other pets in this regard.

2. "Laying hens are loud."

Backyard hens are actually quiet. They are quieter than dogs. A hen will squawk when she lays an egg. That occurs once a day and never at night. The noise level for the squawk during egg laying is up to 70 decibels. This is about the same volume as a normal conversation between two people. This is also in the same range of noise volume made by an air conditioner, a washer, or a flushed toilet. Lawn mowers and barking dogs register at around 90 -100 decibels. This is much louder than backyard hens. Hens prefer to be quiet for their own protection. The concern of noise is a legitimate one when discussing the rooster's crowing. Rest assured, our proposal prohibits owning roosters. Hens are quiet.

3. "Hens produce a lot of poop and waste."

Very little solid waste is produced by chickens because they are small. What waste is produced can be composted to make great fertilizer. An average dog will produce around a pound of poop in a day, whereas a flock of four hens will produce less than half that; about 1.5 ounces of waste per hen. Four chickens produce less waste than a medium sized house cat. All pets produce waste. Backyard hens actually produce less waste than most other single pets. And, the added benefit is that hens' waste has value when composted for soil enrichment and enhancement.

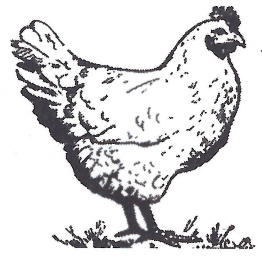
4. "Chickens will attract wild animals to my neighborhood."

By keeping food supply clean and tidy, just as you would when keeping a pet cat or dog, raising chickens doesn't make rodents or other pests magically appear from thin air. If there are pests already in your neighborhood, these undesirables would be just as attracted to spilled or unsecured cat or dog food, wild bird feed, a koi pond, or even to your family's food waste discarded in unsecured outdoor garbage cans. Backyard hen owners do not want undesirable pests around either. If you do have small rodents in your area hens can actually reduce their numbers. Some breeds will catch and eat small mice and moles like cats do. Hens are omnivores. Hens also eat bugs: black widows, snails, ants, flies, termites and more.

5. "Legalizing chickens will negatively affect property values."

Not true. I have never found a news story about the legalization of backyard hens that cited actual evidence indicating that property values drop due to backyard hens. Hens are usually conversation starters that bring neighbors closer together. Neighbors who want to keep hens are just that; your neighbors. They care about the value of their homes and the quality of life in their community. In New York, Portland, Chicago and Boulder, cities with some of the highest property values in the country, hens are allowed. Realtors state that pet hens are like other pets: "When the owner takes care of their property the value stays the same or increases."

Legalize Backyard Hens!



Benefits of Hens:

- ✓ **Fresh Eggs:** organic, nutritious, delicious tasting, “nature’s multi-vitamin”
- ✓ **Insect Control:** eats spiders, snails, termites, fleas, ants & mosquitoes
- ✓ **Food Security:** self-reliance and a dependable food source
- ✓ **Experience for children:** inexpensive and easy to care for, responsibility
- ✓ **Companionship:** social, intelligent and entertaining pet

Community Support is needed to legalize hen ownership in residential Bakersfield!

Do these 2 things:

Visit: thebubh.wixsite.com/bubh & take the Survey

Write: your City Council Member (sample emails on website above)