

# **Responsible Hen Ownership**

## CARE, LICENSING, AND BYLAW





# Introduction

Hens can be an amazing addition to your family! They become important family members who provide healing and love for you just as much as you love and care for them.

The bestest pet parents make their feathered family member's health and happiness a top priority.

This brochure, the Responsible Pet Ownership bylaw, and your pet parenting skills, work together to keep all animals in Sylvan Lake safe, healthy, and happy.

Please join us to make sure all our Sylvan Lake animal residents are treated humanely, responsibly, and with respect!





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## ANIMAL WELFARE<sup>2</sup>

Let's work together to create loving homes for animals, protect animals from harmful situations, make sure lost animals get home safe, and make sure abandoned animals find forever homes.

"Animal welfare refers to the quality of life experienced by an animal and encompasses how well the animal is coping with his or her current situation and surroundings.

- **Nutrition:** factors that involve the animal's access to sufficient, balanced, varied, and clean food and water.
- **Environment:** factors that enable comfort through temperature, substrate, space, air, odour, noise, and predictability.
- **Health:** factors that enable good health through the absence of disease, injury, impairment with a good fitness level.
- **Behaviour:** factors that provide varied, novel, and engaging environmental challenges through sensory inputs, exploration, foraging, bonding, playing, retreating, and others.
- **Mental State:** by presenting positive situations in the previous four functional domains, the mental state of the animal should benefit from predominantly positive states, such as pleasure, comfort, or vitality while reducing negative states such as fear, frustration, hunger, pain, or boredom."\*

# Sylvan Lake's responsible pet parents carefully research before getting hens.



## Start here before applying:

- » Why are you raising hens? For eggs or as pets?
- » Do you have the time, space, and resources to build them a coop and run that will keep them happy and healthy?
- » Are you prepared to spend time with them?
- » Are you ready to 'muck out' their coop?
- » Are you willing to compost and age chicken manure at least two to three months before you add it to your garden so it doesn't burn your plants?
- » Who will take care of them when you are away or on vacation?
- » How many hens do you have the time and money for?
- » Are you ready to care for your hens in all weather conditions? When it's +35°C and -35°C?
- » Are you prepared to care for hens once they quit laying? Many backyard chickens to live 8-10 years
- » Are you ready to take a realistic look at your lifestyle, and pick hen breeds that fit your lifestyle and plans? For example:
  - Breeds that have high egg output may suffer from health problems and early death as a result of laying so many eggs
  - Some breeds are friendly and like a snuggle, some breeds don't like being handled

# Why does the Town require urban hen licenses?

- To help hen owners meet the minimum standards for keeping hens
- Hens can spread diseases that can infect humans, so:
  - Hen keepers must follow Provincial and Federal rules for keeping poultry, and
  - The Town must keep track of all flocks and any deaths or disease outbreaks.



## Licensing Details

- » Hen License: \$60
  - For urban flocks, up to a maximum of 4 hens
  - Valid from January 1 – December 31
- » You may not transfer your hen license to someone else or another property
- » You must renew your licence every year
  - To renew, you must meet or exceed requirements in the Responsible Animal Ownership Bylaw, Section 9.3

## How to apply

1. Create your plan for hen keeping, the coop, and the run to meet or exceed care requirements in sections 9.2 and 9.3 in the Responsible Animal Ownership Bylaw
2. Complete the application: [sylvanlake.ca/animals](https://sylvanlake.ca/animals)
3. Get CAO approval
4. Pay the license fee
5. Build your approved coop and run, and get your hens





# Are you ready for time commitments?<sup>1</sup>

## DAILY CHORES

Expect to spend a minimum of 15 minutes in the morning and 15 minutes in the evening.

- » Fresh feed, water, grit
- » Open coop in the morning
- » Close the coop in the evening
- » Overall health behaviour check
- » Isolate injured or sick birds immediately
- » Collect eggs
- » Check the weather and adjust coop as needed
- » Turn lights on/off or use timer
- » General housekeeping, including:
  - Cleaning off the roosts
  - Removing/replacing heavily soiled bedding
  - Cleaning up spilled feed or water
  - Changing dirty foot baths
- » Dispose of mortalities according to bylaw
- » Update your records with information such as how many eggs you collected, mortalities, and treatments started

## WEEKLY CHORES

Expect to spend a minimum of 1 hour per week.

- » Clean and disinfect waterers
- » Inspect the coop for evidence of predators or any needed repairs, then make the repairs
- » Manage litter, including add fresh bedding, turn the litter, or change the bedding completely.
- » Check the dust bath and changed if needed.

## MONTHLY CHORES

Expect to spend a minimum of 3 hours per month.

- » Pick up supplies (feed, bedding material, etc.)
- » Clean the coop and remove/replace all bedding material with new bedding
- » Clean dirty surfaces and equipment
- » Rake outdoor run

## SEASONAL CHORES

Expect to spend a minimum of 6 hours deep cleaning the coop, plus more time for weather adjustments and veterinary care.

- » **Weather Adjustments.** Make adjustments to the coop when moving into cooler or warmer temperatures such as adding heaters, supplying additional water sources, providing shaded areas, and adding misters or fans
- » **Veterinary Care.** Your veterinarian may make recommendations for seasonal treatment of your birds. Always consult with your veterinarian before starting any treatment and follow their directions.
- » **Deep Cleaning the Coop.** Deep clean 2 - 3 times a year including washing, scrubbing, and disinfecting all surfaces with a disinfectant. Replace all bedding material, and rake/level outdoor run.



# Responsible Hen Ownership

**It's Bylaw<sup>3</sup>:** Use this simplified list to build your personalized urban hen plan.

## 1. Property Minimum Standards

### The property with the hen coop and run must:

- » Receive approval before you build your coop and before your hens arrive
- » Be on the same property that the applicant resides on
- » Contain a detached or semi-detached dwelling
- » Have no more than one coop and run
- » Keep hens for personal use only

### The hen coop and run must be:

- » Located in a rear yard
- » Located no less than 0.9 metres from the side and rear boundaries of the yard
- » Minimize impacts to adjacent neighbours (away from bedroom windows, the furthest point from the building).

### Number of Hens and Coop Size

- » Maximum of four (4) hens
- » Roosters are NOT permitted
- » Each hen must have at least:
  - 0.37 m<sup>2</sup> of interior floor area, and
  - 0.92 m<sup>2</sup> of outdoor enclosure within the coop.

### Coops Must:

- » Provide at least one nest box per coop
- » Provide one perch per hen that is at least 15 cm long
- » Fully contain your hens inside the coop and enclosed run at all times
- » Be maintained to prevent nuisances, including but not limited to:
  - Minimize attracting animals
    - Coop and enclosure must be predator-resistant
  - Minimize spreading food over the property
  - Minimize excessive smells
  - Minimize excessive noise



# Provide the Five Freedoms<sup>1</sup>

## **Freedom from hunger or thirst:**

By providing ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.

## **Freedom from discomfort:**

By providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.

## **Freedom from pain, injury, or disease:**

By prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.

## **Freedom to express normal behaviour:**

By providing sufficient space, proper facilities, and company of the animal's own kind.

## **Freedom from fear and distress:**

Providing living conditions and treatment to prevent mental suffering.





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## 2. Animal Welfare Minimum Standards

You must take care of your hens to make sure they are comfortable and healthy. That includes, but is not limited to, providing adequate and appropriate:

- » Food
- » Water (liquid and unfrozen),
- » Shelter
- » Light
- » Warmth
- » Ventilation
- » Veterinary care
- » Opportunities for essential behaviours such as scratching, pecking, dustbathing, and roosting.
- » Means of preventing distress and disease

You must dispose of waste and maintain a sanitary environment by following the Responsible Pet Ownership bylaw<sup>3</sup>:

- » Keep your coop and enclosure clean
- » Dispose of manure properly in your compost bin or in a lidded garbage bin
- » Store manure in an enclosed container
- » Store no more than 3 cubic feet of manure at a time

## 3. Slaughtering Hens and Removing Hens

- » You may not slaughter hens within Town limits
- » If you must get rid of hens, you may:
  - Have your hen euthanized by a veterinarian,
  - Relocate your hen to a farm, or
  - Take your hen to a licensed abattoir
- » You must notify the Town of Sylvan Lake, within 5 business days of any change in brood size, for any reason, including death



# For the love of chickens!

“Chickens lead rich and complex social lives, have many interests and are keenly self-aware. They have long-term memory and clearly demonstrate that they anticipate future events. They form deep bonds with other flock mates and other species, like dogs and humans. They are sentient beings who feel pain and pleasure much like we do.” Robert Grillo



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## 4. Diseases and Deaths

**Why do you have to comply with rules about death and diseases? Chickens can host and carry dangerous diseases that can pass to humans and other animals. You must follow Municipal, Province of Alberta, and Federal law, including:**

- » You must notify the Town of Sylvan Lake of any change in brood size, for any reason, including death, within 5 business days
- » If your hens experience a disease outbreak, you must immediately notify Town of Sylvan Lake Municipal enforcement within 5 business days and provide:
  - Details of the outbreak
  - Steps you have taken to control disease and prevent a future outbreak
- » Dispose of dead hens by taking them to Sylvan Lake Veterinarian Clinic
  - Do not put dead hens in the garbage, bury them, or dispose of them in any other way
  - The clinic provides cremation services for deceased hens for a small fee
  - 4640 44 Street, 403 887 4240
- » Register your flock in the provincial database:
  - <https://www.alberta.ca/register-with-the-animal-premises-identification-program.aspx>
- » Obtain a Premise Identification (PID) Number.
  - [https://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$Department/deptdocs.nsf/all/trace12354/\\$FILE/PID%20Application.pdf](https://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$Department/deptdocs.nsf/all/trace12354/$FILE/PID%20Application.pdf)
  - The PID enables the Province of Alberta to keep track of livestock site locations in case of a disease outbreak
  - <https://www.alberta.ca/register-with-the-animal-premises-identification-program.aspx>
- » The Province of Alberta will maintain communication with site owners if information or incidents occur that need site owners to take action
- » Follow Canadian Food Inspection Agency biosecurity procedures to lower your risk of a disease outbreak:
  - <https://inspection.canada.ca/animal-health/terrestrial-animals/biosecurity/standards-and-principles/eng/1344707905203/1344707981478>





# Choosing Hen Breeds<sup>1</sup>

- » Different chicken breeds need different care requirements. If you choose to mix breeds, it will be extra work to look after the unique needs of each breed.
- » Sylvan Lake's cold climate demands that you pick breeds tolerant of the cold. Breeds that originated in Northern climates are good choices because they are well adapted to cold weather with:
  - Thick feathering
  - Small combs/wattles to decrease the risk of frostbite
  - Larger body mass
- » Consider the breed's behavioural tendencies and needs
- » Choose breeds that are calm and friendly, such as dual-purpose breeds



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## 5. Enforcement and Inspections

- » Allow Municipal Enforcement Officers to inspect your hens and coops when requested
- » Municipal Enforcement Officers respond to all complaints and when needed begin investigations
- » Disobeying the terms and conditions of your Urban Hen Keeping License may result in:
  - A fine of \$130, or
  - Cancellation of your license
  - If a license is cancelled the hen owner(s) must move the hens to a location outside the Town of Sylvan Lake, at their own expense.
- » Keeping hens without a license is a \$130 fine
- » You may not sell eggs, meat, manure, or other products derived from your hens
- » Hen keeping is enforced under Section 8 of the Responsible Animal Ownership Bylaw 1826/2021<sup>3</sup>





# End of Laying Planning<sup>1</sup>

Before deciding to keep poultry, it is important to consider the lifespan of a bird and how you will make end of life plans. It is much easier to have a plan in place before you find yourself in the middle of a sensitive situation.

End of life plans can be especially difficult for layers because these birds can live for many years after their peak. Layers are often be at their peak level of egg production around a year old before gradually declining in egg production.

An urban flock owner may find themselves with a small flock of birds that are the same age, who are not producing eggs. If you decide to keep your chickens, you could have years of caring for birds that are not laying. Plan in advance to:

- » Continue to care for the birds for the remainder of their life
- » Re-home your birds
- » Consult with your veterinarian about humane euthanasia







# Learn More!

This list should help you get started to learn about caring for urban hens. Keep in mind that online resources may not comply with the Town of Sylvan Lake Responsible Pet Ownership bylaw<sup>3</sup>, and that the Town bylaw takes precedence over material that is not issued by the Town of Sylvan Lake.

## Composting Chicken Manure

- » [www.dummies.com/home-garden/hobby-farming/raising-chickens/chicken-manure-management-recycling-and-composting/](http://www.dummies.com/home-garden/hobby-farming/raising-chickens/chicken-manure-management-recycling-and-composting/)

## Friendliest Chicken Breeds

- » [www.thehappychickencoop.com/the-top-10-friendliest-chicken-breeds/](http://www.thehappychickencoop.com/the-top-10-friendliest-chicken-breeds/)

## 7 Chicken Breeds That Do Well in Cold Climates

- » [www.thehappychickencoop.com/7-chicken-breeds-that-do-well-in-cold-climates/](http://www.thehappychickencoop.com/7-chicken-breeds-that-do-well-in-cold-climates/)

## Chicken Care Workshops

- » [www.afac.ab.ca/resources/urban-hen/](http://www.afac.ab.ca/resources/urban-hen/)

## Livestock Care ALERT Line: Help/Concerns

- » [www.afac.ab.ca/alertline/](http://www.afac.ab.ca/alertline/)

## Comprehensive Guide to Keeping Urban Chickens and Small Flocks

- » [www.afac.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/hen-manual.pdf](http://www.afac.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/hen-manual.pdf)

## Chicken Swing: Which One to Buy and How to Train Your Chickens

Wait, what? A chicken swing? Yes, you heard right! We are all guilty of buying toys for our hens – we just love to spoil them rotten! That's ok, they deserve it!

- » [www.thehappychickencoop.com/chicken-swing/](http://www.thehappychickencoop.com/chicken-swing/)

## Chicken Health for Dummies

- » [www.dummies.com/home-garden/hobby-farming/raising-chickens/chicken-health-for-dummies-cheat-sheet/](http://www.dummies.com/home-garden/hobby-farming/raising-chickens/chicken-health-for-dummies-cheat-sheet/)

# References

1. Content adapted from: [www.afac.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/hen-manual.pdf](http://www.afac.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/hen-manual.pdf)
2. Content adapted from: [www.worldanimalprotection.org.nz/news/animal-welfare-and-why-important](http://www.worldanimalprotection.org.nz/news/animal-welfare-and-why-important)
3. Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw: [www.sylvanlake.ca/en/public-services/animal-control-and-services.aspx](http://www.sylvanlake.ca/en/public-services/animal-control-and-services.aspx)

# 2021

**RESPONSIBLE URBAN HEN OWNERSHIP**

**For more information contact:**

Municipal Enforcement

T 403 858 7280

[www.sylvanlake.ca/municipal-enforcement](http://www.sylvanlake.ca/municipal-enforcement)



**FOR THE LOVE  
OF ANIMALS**

**KEEP THEM HAPPY,  
HEALTHY, AND SAFE**

  
**Sylvan Lake**  
BRILLIANT ALL YEAR