

November 18, 2009

CRR Testimony to Mpls. City Council, Public Safety & Regulatory Services
(poultry permit fee increase)

RE: Amending Title 4, Chapter 70 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances relating to Fowl, Pigeons, and Other Small Animals. This information has been provided to you both in hard copy and electronically.

Dear Chair Samuels and Council Members,

Chicken Run Rescue (CRR) supports an increase in Permit Application and Fees for Fowl, Pigeons and Other Small Animals.

CRR has worked with Minneapolis Animal Care and Control (MACC) since 2001 and with the Animal Humane Society's 5 Metro Area shelters since 2007. After their release from impound, Chicken Run has provided over 600 birds with temporary shelter and vet care, located and screened adopters within 90 miles of the Twin Cities and transported the birds to their new homes. CRR currently has 611 Metro Area subscribers to our adoption newsletter whose primary interest is caring for companion chickens.

Permitting of an animal is a privilege not a right because it impacts the resources of tax funded municipal services such as animal control. There are provisions in city ordinances for the keeping of companion animals because they are widely viewed as family members as long as the animals are properly cared for and they do not negatively impact other residents in densely populated neighborhoods, that practice is compatible with urban living.

Please see the attached joint Position Statement of the country's largest coalition of animal sanctuaries involved in the direct care of unwanted chickens. As the popularity of raising backyard flocks has grown, our shelters have become inundated with calls to take in unwanted chickens. In addition, we understand many communities are now besieged with requests to legally regulate the keeping of backyard flocks.

Backyard chicken-keeping by amateurs raises many serious concerns regarding both the well being of the birds, and the community. Facets of raising domestic fowl solely as a food source that are unfamiliar to most urban dwellers include

- killing and disposal of males who comprise 50% of the birds hatched (see "INSIDE A HATCHERY", 9/1/09 NY Daily News coverage of Hy-Line Hatchery Spencer Iowa, a typical modern industrial hatchery with footage of chick sexing, rooster disposal and debeaking.)

- killing or disposal of hens whose egg production peaks at 18 months of age but have a life expectancy of as much as 14 years- the same as a dog or cat

- home videos on YouTube of backyard chicken slaughter. (we reside in North Minneapolis and do not wish to witness any additional violence in our neighborhood)

- shipment of day old chicks by mail-a process that subjects them to temperature extremes, injury, and sustenance deprivation.

- costs startup costs average \$2000- 3870, supplies and utilities \$288 per year per bird,

- vet care \$100 minimum per year per bird

If city residents are unable or unwilling to pay the application and permit fees to cover the City's costs for regulating domestic fowl, what is the likelihood of investing in their proper care?

Moreover, Backyard chicken-keeping raises serious concerns about ordinance enforcement issues, and the burden placed on already overwhelmed local shelters when birds are abandoned, seized, or surrendered.

In past years we have rescued, cared for and placed in permanent homes an average of 30 birds a year. This year we have had surrender inquiries for 215 fowl since April 1, 2009.

When We started Chicken Run Rescue in 2001, there were fewer than 26 chicken permits in Minneapolis. Today there are over 90 permits issued and over 90 more pending. For every permit there can be anywhere from 3 to 25 birds per household. These figures only include city residents actually going through the required permit process and do not include people who are unaware of or unwilling to get permits so there could be anywhere from 540 to 4500 new permitted chickens in Minneapolis. Since the compliance rate for cat licenses is about 3%, its reasonable to assume the same for chickens, so there could be an additional 18,000 to 150,000 unpermitted chickens in Minneapolis alone. The same trend is occurring in St. Paul, Metro Area suburbs and nation wide. Those figures do not include the number of offspring that might be produced by accidental or intentional breeding.

Animal complaints rank at the top of the demands for city services in Minneapolis. The explosion of activity has created a whole new population of animals requiring regulation, administration of permits, enforcement / inspections, sheltering costs for impounded / seized / surrendered birds, and complaint response now to include regulation of and complaint response to residents engaging in backyard slaughter which is an issue of concern for zoning and health agencies as well.

This taxes an already overburdened and understaffed agency with a whole host of new challenges, not the least of which is the time consuming task of capturing strays and identifying species. A few weeks ago, we were called to rescue a hen who was running loose and terrified in a parking ramp at 11th and Marquette. The citizen who called us had spent a morning searching for someone to help- 311 had erroneously informed her that Minneapolis Animal Care and Control "does not do chickens" and advised her to call pest control. We then provided her with a direct number to MACC and after an hour of effort, the animal control officer was unable to capture the hen. We again were contacted and were able to capture her.

Thank you very much for your consideration. For more information, please visit our websites or contact CRR or and we'll be more than happy to talk with you.

Sincerely,

Mary Britton Clouse
Albert Clouse

--

Chicken Run Rescue
Minneapolis, MN
chickenrunrescue@comcast.net
<http://www.chickenrunrescue.petfinder.org>
<http://www.brittonclouse.com/chickenrunrescue/>

"If robin redbreast in a cage puts all heaven in a rage, how feels heaven

when dies the billionth battery hen?"
--Spike Milligan

ABOUT CHICKEN RUN RESCUE:

Every year, domestic fowl, mostly chickens, are impounded by Minneapolis Animal Control (MAC) and 5 Metro Area humane societies. These birds are victims of neglect, abuse and abandonment, sometimes used as a source of eggs or intended for slaughter, fighting or ritual sacrifice. Some are the discarded outcome of "nature lessons" for children or after a hobby that no longer holds interest. After their release from MAC, Chicken Run provides the birds with temporary shelter and vet care, locates and screens adopters within 90 miles of the Twin Cities and transports the birds to their new homes. Chicken Run Rescue is the only urban chicken rescue of its kind and receives no support from any other organizations, institutions or agencies and depends entirely on donations and sales of art merchandise to continue helping chickens. There is a special need for rooster homes. Don't breed or buy- Adopt! There are never enough homes for displaced animals.