



Courtney Johnson
Coordinator
Ashtabula Local Food Council
3322 Mells Road
Dorset, OH 44032

Ashtabula City Council
4717 Main Avenue
Ashtabula, OH 44004

February 11, 2017

Honorable Members of the City Council,

I am writing today to express support in allowing chickens, ducks, bees, and other small farm animals on properties within the city limits of Ashtabula. I ask that you vote to recommend the creation of an ordinance that will allow for small farm animals and judiciously prescribe the suitable conditions under which a property owner may keep such animals.

Northeast Ohio is home to a thriving local food and urban farming community, one of the fastest growing in the nation. Our county is largely rural in land composition, but it is undeniable that the largest portion of our residents reside within city boundaries. It is not simply trendy to allow backyard chickens within the city, it is an acknowledgment of the changing fabric of our foodshed and an allowance for families to create further food independence. The average chicken, weighing just 7 lbs, will produce over 14,000 calories of highly nutritious food every year, in eggs alone.

The benefits beyond food production are many and varied. Keeping backyard small farm animals is an educational opportunity for young children and adults alike. The manure of fowl, goats, and rabbits can be mixed with kitchen scraps, lawn trimmings, and other compostable materials to create a rich fertilizer that is environmentally friendly and inexpensive. The feeding of kitchen scraps to backyard animals plays a role in reducing the 29 million tons of food waste sent to landfills nationally every year and backyard produced eggs and meat provide significant reduction in the total food miles that comprise the average meal. Fowl are also an excellent source of pest control, regularly eating flies, fleas, grasshoppers, ticks, and mosquitos. Bees provide an unmatched service in crop pollination, and local honey is both nutritious and extraordinarily economical when compared to grocery store products.

There are understandable concerns regarding neighborhood peace, sanitation, and humane care for backyard animals. Careful writing of an ordinance can provide provisions covering all of these aspects, such as limiting roosters, requiring a minimum of bedding and space for each animal, and requiring a license from the health department to keep chickens. The City of Cleveland has written an excellent ordinance pertaining to beekeeping and backyard chickens, the full text of which, and a summary of, are provided in the resource list attached to this letter.

Ashtabula Local Food Council is committed to increasing knowledge and awareness of local food within our county. Backyard animal keeping is a quintessential part of the puzzle of food sustainability and contributes to a vibrant economic community. Far from creating blight, backyard animal farming empowers residents to become careful stewards of their land and the animals that live on it. We are anxious and willing to be a cooperative partner in establishing community-friendly guidelines for backyard small farm animals. Thank you for your time and attention in this matter.

Sincerely,

Courtney Johnson
Coordinator
Ashtabula Local Food Council



Resources Available Online

All of the below links can be found on: www.ashtabulafood.org/byc

Ordinance & Legal Information

Chicken & Bees Ordinance: Cleveland Revamps Zoning Codes to Promote Urban Agriculture
http://cccfoodpolicy.org/sites/default/files/resources/chickens_and_bees_policy_summary_0.pdf

Cleveland Zoning Code 347.02: Restrictions on the Keeping of Farm Animals and Bees
<http://planning.city.cleveland.oh.us/zoning/pdf/34702FarmAnimalsandBees.pdf>

Ohio Chicken Zoning Ordinances
<http://www.backyardchickens.com/tag/ohio-ordinances/articles>

eXtension: Developing Regulations for Keeping Urban Chickens
<http://articles.extension.org/pages/70001/developing-regulations-for-keeping-urban-chickens>

General Animal Husbandry Information

Ohio State University Extension Poultry Resources
<http://www.ohio4h.org/statewide-programs/animal-sciences/poultry/poultry-resources>

eXtension's Recommendation for Poultry Space Allowance
<https://ask.extension.org/questions/257347>

OSU 4-H Guidebook for Broilers (see page 4 for recommendation on space allowance)
http://wayne.osu.edu/sites/wayne/files/imce/Program_Pages/4H/Project_pages/2015/broilers.pdf

University of Maryland Extension: Raising Your Home Chicken Flock
https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/docs/Raising%20Your%20Home%20Chicken%20Flock_FINAL_0.pdf

University of New Hampshire Extension: Housing & Space Guidelines for Livestock
https://extension.unh.edu/resources/files/Resource000471_Rep493.pdf

Humane Farm Animal Care Comprehensive Animal Welfare Standards Comparison By Program – Chickens, Beef Cattle and Pigs (see page 6 for information on space allowance)
http://certifiedhumane.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Comp.Standards.Comparison.Chart_wappendix.11.26.13.pdf

eXtension: Small & Backyard Flocks
<http://articles.extension.org/poultry>

Supplemental Reading

How Many Calories Are In an Egg?

<http://www.healthline.com/health/food-nutrition/calories-in-an-egg>

Benefits of Local Honey

<http://www.livestrong.com/article/266247-benefits-of-local-raw-honey/>

Six Reasons to Keep Chickens

<http://nourishedkitchen.com/reasons-to-keep-chickens/>

The Benefits of Owning Farm Animals in the City

<http://seattlerefined.com/the-home/the-benefits-of-owning-farm-animals-in-the-city>