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Sent: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 11:58:11 AM

Personal information
Full name: Debbie Wall
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Job title:
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City: Winnipeg
Province or territory: Manitoba
Postal code:

Delegation information
Committee: Executive Policy Committee
Committee - council: N/A
Committee - other: N/A
Agenda item (number and title): Responsible Pet Ownership By-Law updates.

Service inquiry: Submit Comments in writing
Participation preference: N/A
Comments in writing: I would like to submit my comments regarding the proposal of having backyard chickens within Winnipeg. I would be in favor only if it were done in the context of rescue. Sanctuaries and rescues struggle to keep up with hens who are egg industry survivors and the establishment of micro-sanctuaries within the city would translate into more lives saved. Of course, those taking in such birds would have to have the financial resources to do so, make a 12 to 14 year commitment to tend to their physical and psychological needs and have access to a veterinarian who is able to provide appropriate medical care when required.

I am against the idea of backyard hens for the purpose of using them for their eggs. The fall-out from such a proposal is as predictable as the sunrise. It has happened to hedgehogs. It has happened to ferrets. It happens to rabbits every Easter and it is happening to chickens where backyard coops are allowed. Unwanted, neglected and abandoned animals end up in already over-burdened sanctuaries and rescues.

In Minneapolis, where permits for backyard hens has grown over the years, Chicken Run Rescue reports that before 2009 they received less than 40 surrender requests per year. Since then they have been asked to take in over three thousand unwanted birds. Common reasons for surrender are cruelty seizure, stray, abandoned, stopped laying eggs, can't afford and behavior problems. They note that chickens are susceptible to predators, vandalism and theft and some of the birds in their care have lost combs, feet and even entire legs to frostbite.

This proposal is supposedly an answer to food security but, due to the costs of building and maintaining a coop and the feeding and providing medical care for the chickens, it is financially out of reach of those to whom food security is mostly an issue. Chickens do not start laying eggs until 6 - 8 months of age and their production diminishes markedly at 1 ½ years of age. Eggs cannot be consumed if the birds are being medicated for any of the diseases they are susceptible to.

And eggs are not healthy part of the diet if you refer to Canada's Food Guide. They are high in cholesterol and saturated fat which are linked to heart disease, our top killer. Another human health concern is avian flu.

The idea of backyard hens promotes animal agriculture, one of the most destructive industries on the planet. Male chicks in hatcheries are killed immediately upon hatching by either gassing, suffocation or maceration. They are literally ground up alive. Canada has the shameful reputation of having some of the poorest animal transportation laws in the developed world. Chicks can be transported up to 72 hours with no food, water or rest and can actually be mailed, if you can believe that, via Canada Post.

The feeding of wildlife within the city is to be prohibited, so it makes no sense to be dotting the landscape with chickens . . . who are essentially food for wildlife. It is also disappointing to see a proposal that has the potential for much harm when the rest of the changes to the RPO would improve the well-being of animals in the City of Winnipeg.