

## **Frequently asked questions about keeping chickens in Fargo**

### **How do I obtain a permit for backyard chicken keeping?**

Print and complete the permit application including a scaled diagram. Applications may be brought into the city auditor's office on the second floor of city hall or mailed in with the application fee to: City Auditor, 200 3<sup>rd</sup> St. N, Fargo, ND 58102. Prior to receiving a permit, the city will inspect and approve the installed chicken coop and run. Once approved the city will mail out a permit tag to be posted on the chicken coop. Permits need to be renewed each calendar year.

### **Can I move my coop around my yard?**

Yes, if you plan to use a portable coop and periodically move it around the yard, indicate possible locations on the permit application.

### **Am I allowed to have the coop in my garage?**

Chicken coops are not allowed in any part of a home or attached garage. A coop may be part of a detached garage or shed as long as there is a physical separation between the coop and run and the space used for non-chicken-keeping purposes.

### **What if there are private restrictions or covenants on my property?**

Private restrictions on the use of property remain intact. A permit issued to a person whose premises are subject to covenants that prohibit the keeping of chickens is void.

### **Can I compost the manure from my chickens?**

Yes, chicken manure may be placed in yard compost piles. If you choose not to compost the manure, the waste must be disposed of properly on a regular basis.

### **Are chickens noisy?**

Hens are social animals and generally cluck amongst themselves during daylight hours at a decibel level similar to that of human conversation. They will briefly make more noise when they are laying their eggs. Hens will occasionally squawk if disturbed by an unfamiliar person or animal.

### **How many eggs do hens lay?**

According to the University of Minnesota Extension Service, hens begin laying at around six months of age and can continue for 5-10 years. Peak production occurs in the first 2 years and they will lay roughly 5-6 eggs each week. Hens need at least 12- 14 hours of light each day to continue laying eggs. A regular light bulb is sufficient to supply this light.

### **Where can I take my chickens if I decide I do not want them anymore?**

Slaughtering chickens in town is prohibited. Unwanted birds may be given to another chicken owner or an area farmer.

## **Where can I dispose of a dead bird?**

If an animal is dead, please double bag the animal and place it in the trash.

<https://www.cityoffargo.com/Residential/YourNeighborhood/Problems/Animals.aspx>

## **Can I get salmonella infection from my chickens?**

Chickens can carry germs such as salmonella even when they appear healthy and clean. Germs can get on coops, feed, water dishes and soil in the areas where they live. Germs can also get on clothing, shoes and hands when handling the birds and if you touch your mouth germs can be transmitted and make you sick. Young children are at risk because their immune systems are still developing and they are more likely to put their fingers in their mouth, and adults with compromised immune systems are more susceptible to becoming infected.

## **How can I reduce the change of salmonella infection?**

To avoid getting sick from salmonella, the North Dakota Department of Health suggests:

- Always wash your hands with soap and water after touching live poultry or anything in the area where they live
- Do not bring chickens into the house
- Do not let children under 5, elderly adults or those with a weak immune system handle the birds
- Do not snuggle or kiss the birds, touch with your mouth or eat or drink around live poultry
- Thoroughly cook eggs collected from the hens

Visit [www.cdc.gov/features/salmonellapoultry](http://www.cdc.gov/features/salmonellapoultry) for additional information

## **What is avian influenza or “bird flu”?**

Avian influenza, commonly referred to as bird flu, is a potential concern with backyard poultry. This is a respiratory disease in birds that has many different subtypes. These viruses occur naturally among wild aquatic birds worldwide and can infect domestic poultry and animal species. Avian flu viruses do not normally infect humans. Rare cases of human infection with these viruses have been reported, however, no documented cases of this has been seen in the United States. Visit [www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/index.htm) for additional information on avian influenza.

## **What steps should I take if I suspect bird flu?**

Bird diseases can spread quickly and kill other nearby birds. Early detection can help prevent this. Currently, Fargo Cass Public Health and Cass County Extension are working on a plan for how to address the issue should there be an avian flu outbreak on our community.

## **Who do I contact to file a complaint?**

Information regarding animal related concerns can be found at:

[www.cityoffargo.com/Residential/YourNeighborhood/Problems/Animals.aspx](http://www.cityoffargo.com/Residential/YourNeighborhood/Problems/Animals.aspx)

In general, call the Fargo Police Department at 701-235-4493 to report a noise complaint, chicken at large, permit violation, or animal abuse. If the complaint is related to odor, improper cleaning of a coop, or issues with rodents, call the Environmental Health Division of Fargo Cass Public Health at 701-476-6729.

**Where can I find additional information about backyard chicken keeping?**

Kelcey Hoffmann, Extension Agricultural and Natural Resource Agent, Cass County. Contact if you have questions about raising chickens, [Kelcey.hoffmann@ndsu.edu](mailto:Kelcey.hoffmann@ndsu.edu), 701-241-5700.

University of Minnesota Extension website:

[www.extension.umn.edu/food/small-farms/livestock/poultry/backyard-chicken-basics](http://www.extension.umn.edu/food/small-farms/livestock/poultry/backyard-chicken-basics)

Internet searches will provide many sites on how to get started and what you need to do to raise healthy egg laying chickens.