

# KEEPING CHICKENS

## in the CITY OF SAN DIEGO

In January 2012 the City of San Diego amended its Municipal Code to allow residents of single family homes, community gardens, and retail farms to keep and maintain chickens. The specific regulations are located in Section 42.0709 and can be found by downloading the following: [Chap 04 Art 02 Div 07, Animals and Poultry](#).

The number of chickens that may be kept on your property is based on how far the chicken coop is from your property lines (zone setback).

Generally, most single family homes in the City of San Diego would be allowed up to five chickens provided the chicken coop were located in the rear yard, 5 feet from side property lines, and 13 feet from the rear property line.

For specific information regarding the zone setback for your property go to the following link and type in your address: [View your property by address](#). You will then receive the zone name for your property. A link to "More Info" takes you to another page that directs you to the regulations for your zone. When viewing the regulations go to the Development Regulations Table for your zone and look up "Setback Requirements." You can also call the Development Services Department's information line at (619) 446-5000, provide your address and request the name of your zone and the zoning setback information. You will receive a return call with the information.



## BENEFITS

There are many benefits that come with backyard chickens.

- A healthy adult hen generally lays up to 300 eggs a year. Five hens would supply approximately 30 eggs a week which would meet the needs of a typical family of four.
- Backyard eggs contain 25 percent more vitamin E, 33 percent more vitamin A, and 75 percent more beta carotene.
- Home raising reduces the need for transporting eggs from farm/factory to store to home resulting in a reduction in carbon emissions and packaging materials.
- Many see a benefit in knowing that the chickens are raised and fed in humane conditions.
- Chicken manure can be added to compost piles or used directly as a fertilizer when tilled into the soil.

## RISKS

Health risks that can result from handling chickens or anything in the areas they occupy. Young children and those with immune impairment are especially at risk. Chickens may have Salmonella germs in their droppings and on their bodies even though they appear healthy. Salmonella can make people sick with diarrhea and fever, often with vomiting and abdominal cramps

## REDUCING THE RISKS

- Do not let children younger than 5 years of age handle or touch chickens without supervision.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water immediately after touching chickens or anything in the area where they occupy. Avoid touching your mouth before washing your hands. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.
- Adults should supervise hand washing for young children.
- Wash hands after removing soiled clothes and shoes.
- Do not eat or drink in the area the chickens occupy.
- Do not let chickens inside the house or in areas where food or drink is prepared, served, or stored, such as kitchens, pantries, or outdoor patios.
- If you have free-roaming live poultry, assume that where they live and roam is contaminated.
- Clean equipment and materials associated with raising or caring for chickens such as coops, feed containers, and water containers, outside the house, not inside.



## SUMMARY OF REGULATIONS

Chickens may be kept and maintained within on property developed with a with a single family residence, a community garden, or a retail farm in accordance with the following:

- No roosters are permitted.
- Up to five chickens may be kept when the coop is located outside of all required setbacks.
- Up to fifteen chickens may be kept when the coop is located 15 feet from all property lines and outside of all required setbacks, whichever is greater.
- Up to 25 chickens may be kept when the chickens are located at least 50 feet from any building used as a residence.
- A chicken coop shall be provided and must be predator proof, easily cleaned, well vented and large enough to provide for the free movement of the chickens.
- The outdoor enclosure shall be predator proof, easily cleaned, fenced to keep the chickens on the property and a minimum of 10 square feet per chicken.



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

*Are chickens dirty?*

As with any animal, chickens can be "dirty" if they are not properly cared for. A chicken that is properly cared for is just as clean as a well cared for dog or cat.

*Are chickens noisy?*

Roosters are noisy and prohibited. A hen will cackle at times during the day, and will occasionally squawk, but these, and most other sounds, are not very loud, and are quieter than most everything else that occurs in the surrounding neighborhood. Hens sleep once it is dark.



## FAQS CONTINUED...

*Should you have more than one hen?*

Yes. Chickens have a strong social structure.

*Do you have to have a rooster for a hen to lay eggs?*

No. Without a rooster, hens will still lay eggs.  
Roosters are only necessary to create fertile eggs.  
Non-fertile eggs are as nutritious as fertile eggs.

*At what age do hens start laying eggs?*

Typically hens will start to lay when they are 5- 6 months of age.

*How long do they lay eggs before they become non-laying hens?*

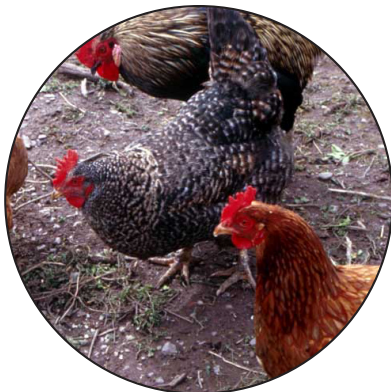
Peak production generally occurs at two years of age and slowly declines thereafter. For this reason it is a good practice to vary the ages of your hens so that the older hens may "retire" while the younger ones continue to produce eggs.

*How long do chickens live?*

The typical life expectancy seems to be 5 to 10 years depending on care and protection from predators.

*How do you deal with excrement?*

It makes excellent compost, especially when combined with materials high in carbon such as the shavings, straw, and sawdust which are often used for litter. The mixture of these makes a balanced mixture for a compost pile.



## OTHER INFORMATION RESOURCES

- USDA Food Safety & Inspection Service: [www.fsis.usda.gov](http://www.fsis.usda.gov)
- Centers for Disease Control (CDC) - Handling Chicks: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
- San Diego County Veterinarian - Dead Animal Disposal: [www.sdcountry.ca.gov](http://www.sdcountry.ca.gov)
- Internet searches will provide many sites on how to get started and what you need to do to keep and maintain healthy egg laying chickens.

