

Raising Fowl and Small Animals in Urban Areas

Phillip J. Clauer, Poultry Extension Specialist, Animal and Poultry Sciences

Raising hobby fowl like pigeons, cage birds, ornamental fowl and small laying flocks is an increasingly popular pastime for urban residents. While at the same time, city limits and subdivisions seem to advance further into the rural countryside.

Most of us can appreciate the pleasures and benefits of raising birds and small animals. It is a relaxing activity that offers an insight into other forms of life and basic life processes. People enjoy the companionship of their birds and the social activities which come from club activities and competitions.

The urban animal hobbyist must try not to infringe on his neighbor who may be sensitive to noise, odor, flies, rodents and unsightliness due to inadequately designed and maintained facilities. People differ in their tolerance to the same conditions. Just because you let your chickens run free for years doesn't mean the new neighbor will enjoy them in their yard or garden.

The following are some guidelines for owners of birds and small animals in urban areas. By following the guidelines you can avoid a good deal of conflict with others in your community and avoid the development of ordinances banning the raising of certain animals in your community.

1. Health and Safety: The important factors to consider are the location of animal enclosures in relation to residences, storage of feed to avoid rodent problems, fly control, sanitation, and disposal of animal waste in a safe manner. The health and well being of the animals should also be taken into account. The animals must be given adequate space, proper nutrition, sufficient attention and a place to seclude themselves. The enclosure should also provide protection from the environment and predators.

- Provide a minimum of 1 sq. foot per pound of body weight for permanent indoor confinement areas.
- Provide 3 cubic feet of air (total enclosed space) per pound of body weight for permanent indoor confinement quarters.
- DO NOT place outdoor enclosures within 150 feet of the property line of another property owner.
- DO NOT place any permanent detached structures within 100 feet of the residence of another property owner.
- Never allow animals or birds to roam free.
- Store feed in rodent proof containers.
- Clean litter and animal waste on a regular basis and dispose of promptly and properly.

2. Appearance and Property Values: The appearance of all types of equipment and housing, particularly external runs that are visible to the neighbor, should not detract from the overall appearance of the surroundings. Exteriors of sheds and other structures should be kept painted and well-maintained.

Weeds and trash should be removed from around the facilities. Proper landscaping can provide screening and also help muffle sounds. Old, unkept structures surrounded by weeds and piles of trash are not acceptable. Provide a sight fence or shrub screening to a minimum height of 4 feet around any outdoor enclosure.

3. Noise and Odors: All animals and birds have characteristic noises and odors. Owners are obliged to house animals so the odors are not offensive and noises are no louder than the normal speaking voice of an adult human. Owners can do this by insulating quarters, providing adequate ventilation and using good sanitation practices.

Finally, diplomacy and cooperation can help avoid conflicts. If you are raising animals or birds in an urban environment, follow some of these suggestions and you can prevent yourself and others raising animals in your community from unnecessary conflict and ordinances.

(Some materials in this article were taken from "Raising Small Animals and Fowl in Urban Areas" by John Skinner, University of Wisconsin, Extension Division.)

Reviewed by Audrey McElroy, associate professor, Animal and Poultry Sciences