

# Poultry And Small Livestock Regulations

Allowing poultry and other small livestock to be raised in residential areas is another strategy for increasing access to food. Chickens, rabbits, goats and other small animals provide eggs, milk, and meat. Plus, they enhance gardens and farms by eating bugs, managing brush and generally improving biodiversity. And of course, their manure helps complete the natural nutrient cycle so things grow better.

Some communities in Massachusetts and the Pioneer Valley already have effective regulations for keeping chickens and other small livestock in residential neighborhoods. Typically, controls are placed on the type and number of animals allowed (often based on lot size), the size and setbacks of animal enclosures, and clear procedures for handling complaints from neighbors.

Other communities, especially those that are more rural in character, may address small livestock regulation through a “right to farm” bylaw, which typically offer greater flexibility in the keeping of small farm animals.

## EXAMPLES OF POULTRY AND SMALL LIVESTOCK REGULATIONS

### Arlington, Massachusetts

Up to six (6) hens—and no roosters—are allowed in residential districts by right. Hens and eggs cannot be sold commercially, and must be kept at least 25 feet from residences on adjacent lots. Owners must obtain a permit from the local Board of Health.

### Northampton, Massachusetts

The City established two categories of animals which are allowed as accessory uses. The first category covers animals which are considered pets. It allows up to six rabbits, and up to six chickens or three ducks per parcel or per structure. The number of chicks and ducklings is not limited. Coops must be at least 4 feet from property boundaries and at least 10 feet from existing residential structures on abutting parcels. All stormwater runoff from coops, runs and compost areas must be contained on site. The second category covers “farm animals and exotics” and sets more restrictive standards. It requires a minimum lot size of 30,000 square feet to keep animals including sheep, goats, and llamas. Three animals are allowed for the first 30,000 square feet, with an additional animal allowed for each additional 10,000 square feet of lot area. Other types of animals require an additional 15,000 square feet for each animal beyond the first three. Animals



under six months are not counted toward the limits. Stables must be at least 100 feet from a street lot line and 30 feet from other lot lines. Stables, corrals and yards must be kept clean without excessive odor, dust or mud.

### **Easthampton, Massachusetts**

The City allows up to 25 hens or other poultry (but no roosters!) on lots that are at least one acre in most (but not all) residential districts. Up to six hens (again, no roosters) are allowed on lots of at least 15,000 square feet in more residential districts. Hens and small livestock are allowed by Special Permit on lots smaller than 15,000 square feet.

## **IMPLEMENTING REGULATIONS FOR POULTRY AND SMALL LIVESTOCK**

When it comes to regulations for poultry and small livestock for food, every community is different. Many communities regulate small animal keeping through zoning bylaws; other towns do it primarily with board of health regulations. Some key factors to keep in mind when deciding whether a new or improved regulation for poultry and small livestock include:

- Should there be different rules about small livestock for outlying areas versus more densely settled areas of the community?
- Should the regulations apply only to animals kept for “personal” use in residential areas—and be structured to make sure that commercial livestock operations are kept in agriculturally or commercially zoned areas?
- Should residents be required to register small livestock, the way many communities require dog licenses?
- How are large livestock, like cows, bison, and horses, regulated?
- Who will inspect animal facilities, enforce regulations, and handle complaints?

## **LINKS TO MORE INFORMATION**

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT KEEPING CHICKENS, VISIT THE LINK BELOW

<http://pioneervalleybackyardchickenassociation.weebly.com/index.html>

<http://www.backyardchickens.com/>

<http://www.backyardpoultrymag.com/>

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### **FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT**

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