

Recommendations from The Animal Welfare Advisory Committee regarding the London Urban Agriculture Strategy Draft:

-it is the view of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, that they must be involved in process of the provision of policy and standards recommendations for ensuring animal welfare as it relates to urban agriculture.

Backyard Chickens pilot project:

Advise that there be no change to the current bylaw prohibiting backyard chickens for the following reasons:

-the current standard for handling, housing, and kept chickens does not meet the welfare needs of chickens.

-concerns regarding the risks to chickens in extreme weather conditions. Animal rescuers have raised concerns regarding admissions for chickens with frostbite. Keeping backyard hens requires a specialized level of education to ensure the health and welfare of the chickens is met. The optimal range in temperature for chickens is between 12-21 degrees Celsius. Without protection above or below this ideal range, they may suffer heat exhaustion and death at temperatures over 29 degrees Celsius, the inability to maintain body temperature at 0 degrees Celsius and frostbite and hypothermia at -9 degrees Celsius. (<http://www.chickenrunrescue.org/>)

-rodenticides/"pest control" methods can cause harm to both non target wildlife and domestic pets and also affect the health and welfare of non-target animals.

-wildlife are too often viewed as "pests" and the potential for trapping, killing, or relocating wildlife due to improper housing/security of chickens/chicken feed storage/refuse increases, adversely affecting wildlife. Our current wildlife conflict policy states that wildlife must not be intentionally injured, orphaned, or displaced and must be respected.

-insufficient avenues for the provision of both veterinary care and shelter resources for those birds whose welfare has been jeopardized. At present, there are no veterinarians within the city who specialize in the treatments of chickens. There is also the concern of whether urban poultry owners would aim to receive appropriate and/or prompt care should their animal become ill.

-Mailing of Chickens: Canada Post offers mail service for day old chicks as to courier companies. This can leave animals with the possibilities of suffocation, starvation, as well as the impacts of temperature variation and physical injury. (See: <https://www.canadapost.ca/tools/pg/manual/Pgnonmail-e.asp#1378261>)

-Disposal of spent backyard chickens: After two years of age the production of eggs is drastically reduced and at this point most chickens are considered spent. Unwanted hens can be abandoned, kept in inhumane circumstance and/or sold at open market as well as left in the care of the London Animal Care Centre who does not currently have housing for such.

-Rental Chickens: A company serving southern Ontario who offers chickens on a rental basis seasonally. There is a lack of information as to what happens to the chickens when they are spent.

-urban wildlife conflicts increase when attractants are present in the environment. As London is home to natural predators of chickens such as skunks, raccoons, coyotes, etc, there is a potential that these animals may prey on backyard chickens increasing potential incidents of human/wildlife conflicts. Additionally, mice and rats as well as flies and other insects are attracted to both the food and droppings and often remain in unwanted areas around homes, under porches, in sheds, backyards and garages creating what many homeowners may see as 'pest' problem.

-increased burden placed upon Animal Services, lack of shelters/rescues, and by law officers to attend to the welfare protection and enforce standards for backyard chickens. Bylaws prohibiting the keeping of pigs have remained in place due to the same concerns.

-risks of predation on quails and chickens by companion cats and dogs, wildlife.

-the use of the word "pest" in this document to describe wildlife who come into direct conflict with residents due to inadvertent attractants adversely affects how our urban wildlife are viewed by the public and such language puts the onus on wildlife to avoid conflict, rather than on residents to ensure attractants are not provided and that chickens, by products, feed, etc. are properly secured.

-concern exists regarding the ethics and welfare of mailing chickens, as well as the welfare of chickens who have reached the average of two year egg laying peak and the potential for abandonment, slaughter, or need to be sheltered.

-how will welfare concerns such as inadequate husbandry practices will be dealt with. London Animal Care and Control, as well as animal shelters are already often overburdened with regards to domestic animals not properly cared for, abandoned, or mistreated.

-raising quails and chickens require a high degree of animal husbandry knowledge.

-zoonoses such as avian flu between urban kept birds and wild flocks, waterfowl, and the commercial industry. <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/gardening/keep-backyard-chickens-away-waterfowl-protect-against-avian-flu>

-Public Health Concerns:

-Public health concerns for humans and companion animals as it relates to the keeping of quails and chickens: See <http://www.cbc.ca/news/health/salmonella-outbreak-linked-to-live-chicks-at-alberta-hatchery-1.3087825>: **"The Public Health Agency of Canada is investigating a salmonella outbreak linked to live chicks at an Alberta hatchery"**. The public health agency was quoted "Children under five years old, pregnant women, the elderly and people with weak immune systems shouldn't handle or touch live poultry" and "Since live animals can transmit the bacteria in their feces, you can also contract salmonella from a bird, its droppings or from environments where birds have been." "Veterinarians have also advised precautions, such as avoiding contact with dogs and cats less than six months old,

reptiles, amphibians, rodents and chicks or ducklings, especially in homes with very young children or high-risk patients, including those being treated for cancer.”

Salmonella Infection: Between Jan 4th-May 13 2017 the CDC reports 352 cases of Salmonella Infection associated with contact of backyard flocks. Out of this number, 71 have required hospitalization & 36% of those infected were children under 5 years of age. This number increases to 961 cases, 215 hospitalizations as well as one death as of July 13th of this year. (<https://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/live-poultry-06-17/index.html>)

Food Safety: Provincially, urban egg producers can only sell their ungraded eggs for a consumers own use under certain circumstances (eggs must be clean, not leaking and sold only from the producers premises). All poultry sold in Ontario is required to be inspected by a meat inspector & slaughtered at a licensed abattoir. (<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock/urbanagricul.html>) As access to such may prove difficult to the average chicken owner, this can raise a concern regarding the safety of the food should chicken owners choose to use ‘backyard slaughter’ as a method of disposal for food purposes. There are ample resources online as to how to “quickly and easily slaughter your own chicken”.

Concerns Regarding Bee Keeping:

Bee Keeping and its impact on native pollinators informed by a local and recent study and article quoted as doi:

10.1111/cobi.12839. “Questioning public perception, conservation policy, and recovery actions for honeybees in North America” By Sheila R. Colla & J. Scott MacIvor, Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University Ontario, Canada as follows:

“Although losses of managed honeybee colonies are recorded annually, we argue that honeybee losses are not a conservation problem, but instead a domesticated animal management issue. By focusing attention on honeybees, policies and subsequent resources may undermine native bee conservation and have negative impacts ecologically and socially. The popularity of hobby and commercial beekeeping outside of intensive agricultural systems has increased dramatically (Moore & Kosut 2013). Of concern is that beekeepers are increasingly given access to natural areas (e.g. PPAP 2016) often without prior environmental impact assessments or ongoing monitoring of native bee communities. These initiatives are often portrayed as conservation initiatives; to ‘save the bees’, increase wildflower pollination, and connect with nature. From a beekeeper’s perspective, bringing hives into natural or urban areas can decrease exposure to agrochemicals and increases access to floral diversity for honey production and nutrition (Lorenz & Stark 2015). However, these habitats are usually high in native bee diversity (e.g. Hendrix et al 2010; Bates et al 2011; Tonietto et al. 2011; Murray et al 2012; Fortel et al. 2014) and not pollinator-limited (Wagenius & Lyon 2010; Williams & Winfree 2013).

While honeybees have received significant positive press and public support there are important yet often ignored, reasons why increasing their numbers outside of intensive agricultural systems should be avoided. Honeybees have large colonies and have become invasive in many regions outside of their Old World origin (Cane, 2003; Moritz et al. 2005; Aizen & Harder, 2009). Honeybees are prone to a number of diseases which can vary in prevalence due to many factors. For example, Youngsteadt et al. (2015)

found worker survival decreased significantly with increased urbanization and management suggesting that strict regulation and training of beekeepers are needed. Additionally, lab studies show honeybee diseases can transfer to other species (Hoffman et al. 2008; Graystock et al. 2016), though there are many knowledge gaps surrounding the impacts of this on wild populations, increasing the number of hives in cities or natural areas could lead to sources of diseases into surrounding areas. In addition to disease transmission, honeybees compete with wild bees for pollen and nectar (Kato et al. 1999; Dupont et al. 2003, Paini, 2005; Watts et al. 2012; Hudewenz & Klein, 2013). A typical apiary of 40 hives removes the equivalent of the larval mass pollen provisions of 4,000,000 solitary bees (Cane & Tepedino 2016). Honeybees can forage 2-3 km covering large fragmented areas and visit thousands of flowering species (Beekman & Ratnieks, 2000). Once a good food source is found, they recruit colony mates to maximize pollen and nectar foraging (Seeley et al. 1991). This has negative impacts on native bees; for example, Thomson (2004, 2006) documented declines in foraging activity of native bees with proximity to honeybee colonies, especially among species active at the end of the summer.”

Risks to native plant and natural ecosystems: “There are also potentially important impacts on native plant communities and natural ecosystems with the introduction of honeybee colonies. For example, honeybees can facilitate invasive plants through pollination that enhances seed set and outcompetition of native vegetation (Barthell et al. 2001).”

Societal Impacts: “areas where there is high human density, sting risk and anaphylactic reactions might also increase. More nuanced is the growing disconnect people may have with understanding the importance of native biodiversity and ecosystem integrity. The act of beekeeping under the auspice that one is ‘saving the bees’ is akin to domesticating nature, whereby natural processes are lost in exchange for human welfare (Kareiva et al. 2007). Redirecting public attention and policy away from domesticated honeybee management to evidence-based conservation management is critical for pollinator biodiversity, which will benefit native plant communities and increase the resilience of our agricultural and natural ecosystems.”

Fruit Trees and plant based foods:

-concern regarding fallen fruit/decomposing fruits and vegetables/inadequate composting practices and containment as it relates to attracting wildlife and increasing wildlife conflicts.

-the use of the word “pest” should not be used for the purpose of the London Urban Agriculture Strategy, which further perpetuates negative views and impacts for urban wildlife and insects that are important to healthy urban ecosystems.

