

## INFORMATION ABOUT RESPONSIBLE CHICKEN CARE IN CITIES

### Sanitary issues:

- Most urban chickens are treated like any other pet and their coops are cleaned about as often as dog-owners clean up their yard. Responsible chicken owners will clean a coop a minimum of once a week if not more often.
- The amount of chicken manure produced by six hens is roughly equivalent to the dog droppings produced by a medium-large dog. And, unlike dog or cat poop, chicken manure can be easily composted into garden fertilizer instead of ending up in landfills. [SoPo chickens website: <http://www.sailzora.com/chickens>; Chicago chicken owners' experiences]

### Noise:

- On average, hens are far quieter than most dogs, parrots, or macaws. They generally make a soft chuckle or cluck. Occasionally, when they are showing off an egg they've just laid, their clucking is slightly louder.
- Normal noises are not audible past 25', the loudest noises at about 50'.
- Roosters can be loud – for this reason, cities that allow chickens may have prohibitions on roosters. [SoPo chickens website: <http://www.sailzora.com/chickens>]

### Pests and Predators:

- Many animals see chickens as prey: raccoons and loose dogs are the most likely predators in an urban setting. Responsible chicken owners will ensure their chickens are kept in a secured, fenced yard or run during the day and a secure, locked coop at night. [*Storey's Guide to Raising Chickens*, Gaile Damerow.]
- Chickens eat insects of all types, as well as small rodents. In secure yards where chickens are allowed some time to “free range,” the chickens will search out and eat insects such as ticks, fleas, millipedes, earwigs, grubs, beetles, spiders, moths, and worms. Chickens have also been known to eat mice and roaches. [Backyard Chickens: [www.backyardchickens.com/forum](http://www.backyardchickens.com/forum); experience of Linda Nellett, Chicago resident – 45<sup>th</sup> ward]
- Chickens also eat many types of plants and green material including those identified as weeds (such as dandelions) and “waste” (such as carrot tops, peels, and wilted or bruised produce.) Gardeners and people interested in urban agriculture see chickens playing a valuable role by eating this excess or unwanted material from the garden and “converting” it into fresh eggs and manure for compost. [Backyard Chickens: [www.backyardchickens.com/forum](http://www.backyardchickens.com/forum); experience of Linda Nellett]
- While rats may be attracted to chicken feed, they are opportunists. They will scavenge food from the most convenient place: an open trash container or Dumpster, discards dropped by people, food placed outside for cats and dogs, and wild bird and squirrel feeders. Responsible chicken owners store feed in secure containers and do not leave excess food around for rats to eat. [Ken Koelkebeck, PhD, UIUC Extension Poultry Specialist said that rats and mice are drawn to chicken feed, but less likely to be eating chicken manure. Properly designed and constructed coops/enclosures should prevent rats' access to chicken feed, and feed containers (metal) should be kept covered and secured.]

### Human Disease issues:

- Avian influenza of the type contagious to humans has not been found in North America.
- Should avian influenza ever reach North America, it would more likely spread where chickens have contact with the droppings of wild and migratory fowl, such as ponds frequented Canada geese. These are conditions not likely in a small city backyard where only a few chickens reside. [<http://www.pandemicflu.gov>]
- Salmonella (common enterobacteria, can cause foodborne/gastrointestinal illness) is the other primary concern associated with chicken and eggs. Chickens are no more likely to carry it than parakeets and pet reptiles. Good hand-washing practices are always important after handling animals and their waste. [CDC website: <http://www.cdc.gov>]