

Chicken Keeping Permit Application

Purpose: According to Sec. 31-514 Subd. 6 of the City Code 'Any person who keeps chickens in the City of Stillwater in the RA and RB zoning district must obtain a permit prior to acquiring the chickens. The first permit is valid for up to two years beginning on the date the chickens arrive on the site and ending on December 31 of the following year. Subsequent permits are valid from January 1 of one year to December 31 of the second year. Applications for permits must be made to the community development department.'

Process:

1. Application form and materials submitted to Community Development Department via mail, drop off or submitted electronically to PlanningDept@ci.stillwater.mn.us.
2. Once application is deemed completed, staff will send notices of the request to all neighbors within 150' of the applicant.
3. If no written objections are received by the City within 10 days of the mailing, a permit may be issued by Community Development staff.
 - a. If written objections are received, the matter will be scheduled and heard in front of the City Council.
4. Permit will be mailed to applicants for their signature and returned to the City for the official record.
5. Once the City receives the signed permit, it will go in the official record.

Renewals:

1. As the initial two year permit expiration nears, City staff will send renewal notices to the applicant. The applicant must complete and return the notice to the City within the time frame listed.
2. Once City staff have received the completed renewal notice, updated permits will be issued.

Permit Application Requirements: Complete applications must include:

- ☐ Completed Chicken Keeping Permit form
- ☐ \$50.00 Permit fee
- ☐ Scaled sketch/map of the location of the chicken coop and pen in relation to your home, lot lines, fencing and any adjacent houses. Please include dimensions.
- ☐ Images of the proposed coop/pen, proving that the structure has a roof and four walls as required by code.
- ☐ Plan for temperature control for both winter and summer conditions.



216 4th Street North Stillwater MN 55082

651-430-8800

www.ci.stillwater.mn.us

PlanningDept@ci.stillwater.mn.us

CHICKEN KEEPING PERMIT

Permit No. _____

Date Filed: _____

Base Fee: **\$50.00**

(Payable to City of Stillwater)

Receipt No. _____

Please read and initial each of the following:

_____ I understand that the City will send notices of my permit application to all neighbors within 150 feet of my property lines. If no written objections are received by the City within 10 days of mailing, the permit may be issued by the Planning Department. If any written objections are received within that time period, the City Council must review the permit application for approval.

_____ I have read, and I understand the material contained within the publication entitled "Recommendations for Municipal Regulation of Urban Chickens."

_____ I have read, and I understand the conditions under which I may keep chickens, Sec 31-514 Subd.6 in the City code. I agree to abide by these conditions.

Applications must include:

- ☐ Completed Chicken Keeping Permit form
- ☐ Scaled sketch/map of the location of the chicken coop and pen in relation to your home, lot lines, fencing and any adjacent houses. Please include dimensions.
- ☐ Images of the proposed coop/pen, proving that the structure has a roof and four walls as required by code.
- ☐ Plan for temperature control for both winter and summer climates.

Please provide the following information and signatures	
Printed name of Applicant	Applicants Address
Address where chickens are to be kept	Application submittal date
Applicant's phone	Applicant's email
Applicants signature	Number of Chickens requested

FOR OFFICE USE:		
Notices mailed on: _____	Objections received:	Yes No
Number of chickens allowed with this permit? _____		
Permit Approved Yes No By: _____	Permit fee paid:	Yes No
Permit valid until: _____		

Sec 31.514 - Miscellaneous residential and non-residential performance standards.

Subd. 6. Keeping of chickens.

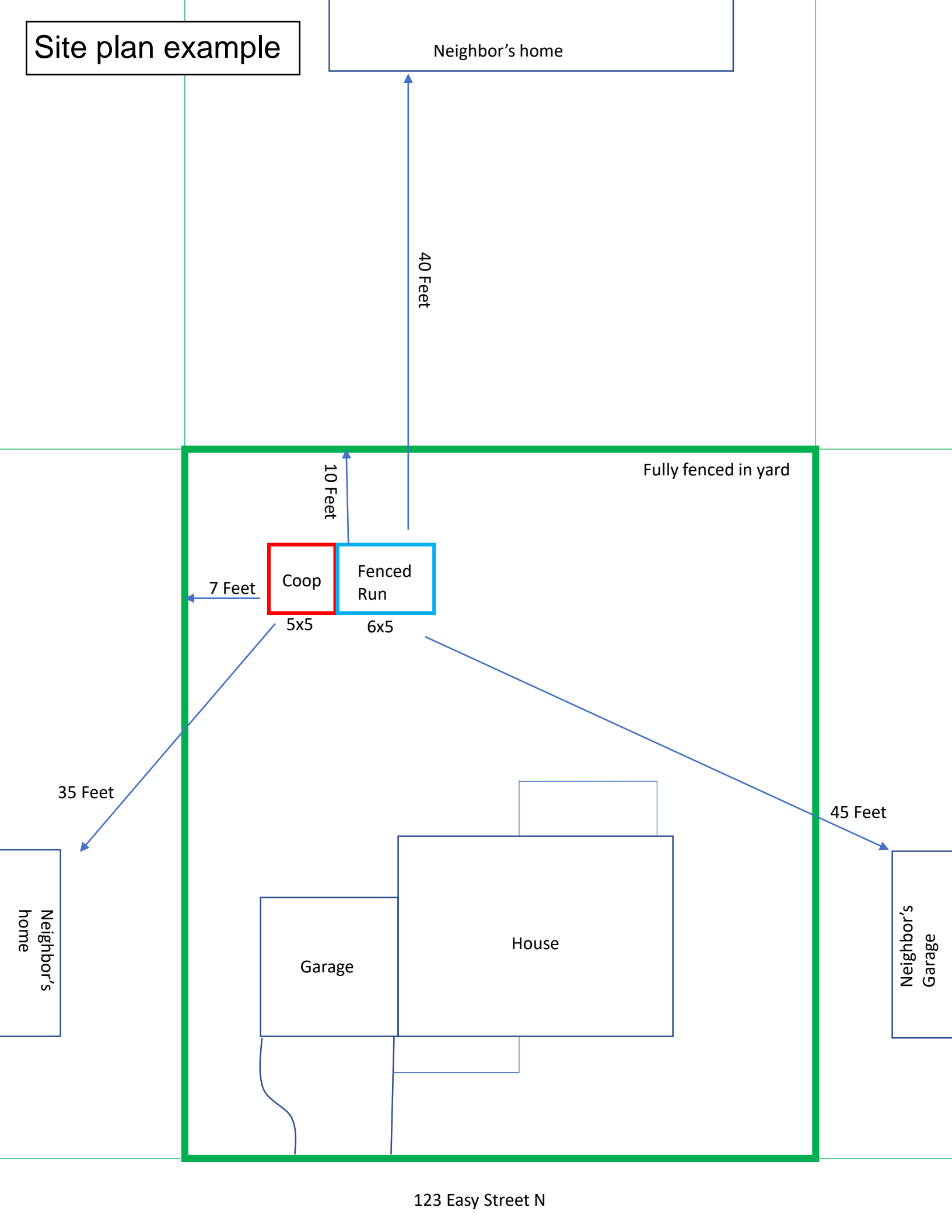
- (1) Any person who keeps chickens in the City of Stillwater in the RA and RB zoning district must obtain a permit prior to acquiring the chickens. The first permit is valid for up to two years beginning on the date the chickens arrive on the site and ending on December 31 of the following year. Subsequent permits are valid from January 1 of one year to December 31 of the second year. Applications for permits must be made to the community development department.
 - i. Fees charged for the issuance of a permit to keep chickens will be set by the city council.
 - ii. The city may refuse to grant or may revoke a permit if the chickens become a nuisance, as evidenced by a second substantiated violation (within 12 months of a first substantiated violation) of this section of the City Code, or [Chapter 38](#) (Nuisances) of the City Code.
 - iii. The city may refuse to grant a permit to, or may revoke a permit from, a person convicted of cruelty to animals.
 - iv. Permits are non-transferable and do not run with the land.
 - v. A permit constitutes a limited license granted to the chicken keeper by the city and in no way creates a vested zoning right.
 - vi. Prior to issuance of a permit, the prospective permit holder must acknowledge they have read the chicken run rescue publication entitled "Recommendations for Municipal Regulations of Urban Chickens (2010)" or similar publications approved by the city's community development department.
 - vii. Prior to issuance of a permit, the prospective permit holder must provide a plan for maintaining an adequate temperature in the coop for the safety of the chicken hens. The plan must address both extreme winter and summer temperature conditions.
 - viii. Prior to issuance of a permit notices must be mailed to all homes within 150 feet of the applicant's property lines.
 - a) If there are objections received within ten days of mailing the notices, then the permit application must be considered by the city council.
 - b) If there are no objections received within ten days of mailing the notices, then the permit application will be processed by city staff. It will not be referred to the city council for consideration.

(2) Each person holding a permit to keep chickens within the City of Stillwater shall comply with the following:

- i. The principal use of the specific property must be either single-family residential or two-family residential. A permit will not be issued for any property which is used principally for something other than single-family or two-family. If the property's principal use is two-family residential, then the property owner must sign the permit in addition to the chicken keeper;
- ii. No person may keep more than five chickens;
- iii. No person may keep a rooster;
- iv. No person may allow chickens to range freely without fencing or without a mobile pen;
- iv. No person may keep any chickens inside the house;
- v. No person may slaughter any chickens within the City of Stillwater;
- vi. Chickens must be provided a secure and well ventilated roofed structure ("chicken coop");
- vii. The roofed structure and required fencing for the chickens may only be located in a rear yard and must meet setback and building separations as established in city zoning and building codes, except that the roofed structure and fencing must maintain a 20-foot separation from dwellings on adjacent properties;
- viii. The roofed structure shall be fully enclosed, wind proof, and have sufficient windows for natural light;
- ix. The floors and walls of the roofed structure shall be kept in a clean, sanitary and healthy condition with all droppings collected on a daily basis and placed in a fireproof covered container until applied as fertilizer, composted or transported off the premises;
- x. Chickens must be kept in the roofed structure, an attached pen, or a detached mobile pen whenever they are unattended by the keeper; but when attended by the keeper, the chickens are allowed in a completely fenced exercise yard;
- xi. The coop's attached pen must be securely constructed with at least a mesh type material and shall have protective overhead netting to keep the chickens separated from other animals;
- xii. The coop's attached pen must be well drained so there is no accumulation of moisture; and
- xiii. The floor area of the roofed structure or a combination of the floor area and attached pen area must equal at least ten square feet of area per chicken.

(Ord. No. 1051, §§ 1, 2, 10-2-12)

Site plan example



Neighbor's home

40 Feet

Fully fenced in yard

10 Feet

7 Feet

Coop

Fenced Run

5x5

6x5

35 Feet

45 Feet

Neighbor's home

Neighbor's Garage

Garage

House

123 Easy Street N

Information:

- Coop dimensions: 5x5
- Attached fenced in run: 6x5
- Coop will be 7 feet from west property line
- Run/coop will be 10 feet from north property line
- Distances from neighbors homes and garages noted on site plan
- We are applying for 5 chickens (hens, no roosters)
- Back yard is fully fenced in with a 6 foot privacy fence.
- We intend to let the chickens out of the coop/run when we are in the backyard attending them
- Temperature control plan:
 - Winter-
 - Insulated coop
 - Heating lamps
 - Heated water dishes
 - Summer-
 - Fans
 - Windows to help with ventilation



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MUNICIPAL REGULATION OF URBAN CHICKENS

For distribution to public and permit applicants

**BASIC CHICKEN CARE INSTRUCTIONS (pages 2-8)
REQUIREMENTS FOR KEEPING CHICKENS (page 9)**

Mary Britton Clouse
Chicken Run Rescue
2010

Endorsed by
[Chicken Run Rescue](#)
[Eastern Shore Sanctuary and Education Center](#)
[Farm Sanctuary](#)
[The Humane Society of the United States](#)
[Sunnyskies Bird and Animal Sanctuary](#)
[United Poultry Concerns](#)
[Woodstock Farm Animal Sanctuary](#)

BASIC CHICKEN CARE INSTRUCTIONS

CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE ACQUIRING A CHICKEN

Lifespan

- Chickens can live as long as a dog or cat— up to 14 years or longer.
- Egg laying for a hen generally starts at 6 months old, peaks at 18 months and declines with age.

Cost

- Start-Up costs for coop, maintenance, tools, cleaning equipment, heating / cooling appliances, dishes, nets, food storage, scale, fencing, security locks, lighting, motion detectors, monitors, cameras, permit application (\$2-3,000)
- Annual supplies per bird for food, bedding, nutritional supplements, hygiene supplies, permit fee, utilities (\$300)
- Vet care per bird per service (office exam \$66, fecal test \$28, plus other services as needed for illness or injury). Are you able to provide the birds with proper veterinary care needed?

Time

- Average 1 hour per bird per day minimum for cleaning, parasite control, grooming, physical exam, travel time to purchase supplies, construction, repair, medication, feeding, supervise free time out of pen.
- Chickens need to be tended to twice daily. Will you have a person ready to substitute for you when you have reason to be absent?

Space

At least a 6 ft x 12ft x 6 ft high space in a yard is needed for a coop and pen for 4 birds, in addition to a larger fenced area for regular exercise.

Location

Coop and pen should be located in an area that provides shade, direct sunlight, good drainage and protection from prevailing winds and will not present a problem to neighbors.

Uninvited guests

Chickens will attract bird-mites and lice, mice, yard birds, squirrels, raccoons, dogs, coyotes, fox, mink, opossum, rats, owls, bobcats, hawks, snakes, weasels, ferrets, fishers, martens and humans.

ACQUIRING A CHICKEN: ADOPTION OR PURCHASE/BREEDING?

The recent interest in having chickens has overwhelmed animal rescue organizations with inquiries from people wanting to give up unwanted chickens. As with all other animals surrendered to shelters, rescue organizations cannot help them all. There are never enough homes for displaced animals, so adoption of birds who need homes is always the kindest choice. Instead of purchasing from a breeder or hatchery.

Adoption- By adopting from a rescue organization or a private individual, you can know what to expect with regard to the bird's health, sex, behavior and personality. Reputable rescue organizations can provide advice on selecting the right bird and care information, and they generally have a generous return policy to insure that bird will be happy, compatible and well cared for.

Purchase/breeding- The identification of the sex of chicks by feed stores, breeders and hatcheries is often wrong and not apparent until the bird is 6 months old. 50% of the chicks hatched are roosters who are killed or otherwise discarded as waste. Newborn chicks shipped through the postal service are deprived of their mothers, warmth and food. The younger the birds, the more fragile and difficult they are to care for.

HEALTHY BIRD CHECKLIST

Eyes: clear, clean, wide open, alert

Face / comb / wattle: clean, soft, blemish free, healthy deep red indicating good blood supply, (some faces are not red)

Posture: head erect, good balance, stands or perches on both feet on extended legs, good grip on perch, facing activity

Odor: none or slightly fermented hay

Beak / nostrils: clean, uniform, shiny and solid

Legs / feet: clean, shiny, uniform scales and nails; foot bottom soft and blemish-free; legs and toes straight and functional

Feathers: clean, bright, shiny, smooth or fluffy; free of mites or lice

Wings: held close to body, symmetrical, smooth movement in joints when flexed, flight feathers intact

Skin: clean, soft, pale pink and translucent (some breeds have bare red patches at shoulders and keel), free of mites or lice

Droppings: 70% odorless green/ white, firm, 30% stinky brown pasty (cecal), watery if stressed

Keel (sternum): Straight, good muscle mass on either side, lump free

Crop (on bird's right side of lower neck): full, contents of consumed food easily palpated

Vent: petite, clean, moist, soft, pliant

Respiration: 12-37 per min., inhalation louder and shorter than exhalation, minimal chest movement, closed beak

NUMBER OF BIRDS

Calculating available space, time, and cost (see above) will dictate how many birds can be properly cared for:

Coop: 4 sq. feet of floor space minimum per bird for the interior (an area 2 ft x 2 ft per bird)

Pen: 10 sq. ft of floor space minimum per bird (an area 3 ft x 3.3 ft per bird)

Range/ exercise yard: 174 sq. ft per bird (an area about 10 ft. x 17 ft per bird)

A single chicken is a sad chicken. Plan to have at least 2— they are flock animals and need the companionship of other chickens. Generally, 3-5 compatible chickens can be well maintained in a typical city environment. Individual birds' sex, ages and temperaments can affect compatibility. Over crowding chickens is the most common mistake. Hens should outnumber roosters. Sometimes single birds can thrive with a human friend if they have special needs. Roosters, single or in pairs, are very sociable and can make terrific companions if handled gently and often.

HANDLING & RESTRAINT

Never handle a chicken by wings, feet or legs. Herd bird to corner using slow deliberate movement.

(Fast= predator, slow = less threat.) Place hands over top part of wings (shoulders) and hold securely but do not squeeze. Pick up and hold under arm to keep wings in place. Support feet with other hand if bird will tolerate. To restrain for transport or examination, drape a towel over shoulders cape-style and wrap around body.

TRANSPORTATION

Consider travel time and avoid extreme weather conditions. Heat exhaustion can develop quickly, and interior car temps can reach fatal point 10 minutes. Medium-sized, hard pet carriers work well for security, safety, stress. Line with a towel, shredded paper or straw. Food is a good stress reducer. Offer wet food like greens or cucumber for long trips.

ARRIVAL

If other birds are already present, a 2-week quarantine in a separate area is recommended to watch for

signs of illness and parasites. Avoid noisy, high-traffic areas, and allow the bird to acclimate before introducing to other birds, animals and family.

PROVIDING A GOOD HOME

NATURAL HISTORY

It is important to understand how chickens live in the wild and to provide them with an environment that meets those instinctive physical and psychological needs as closely as possible. Chickens are all descended from Tropical Jungle Fowl and are adapted to living in a natural habitat that is spacious, richly vegetated, diverse and warm. This presents a particular challenge in a small, urban setting in a cold climate like Minnesota.

Flocks have a highly developed social structure and members depend on one another for companionship and security. Naturalists have observed that they can recognize and remember 180 other individual flock members. They are ground-dwelling birds. Most are capable of low flight in short distances; smaller birds can fly higher and farther.

In the wild, they roost in trees at dusk before they sleep or to escape predators. They hide their nests in cavities in the ground. The majority of their waking hours are spent active, widely ranging, grazing and foraging for food— plants, bugs and occasionally small rodents. In their natural state, they typically travel 1/2 mile from their roost each day. In the wild, they are never over crowded; if the population becomes too dense, members will break off into subgroups and spread out. They move on from one area to another, which allows food sources to regenerate and prevents their waste from concentrating in one place so it can decompose without health risk to the flock.

Roosters alert the flock to danger, find food and call the hens to it and stand guard as they eat. They select and build nests and will even participate in caring for the young. They also act as peace keepers to intervene in disputes that can develop between flock members. Roosters will start to crow and display courting behaviors at about 6 months of age. It is essential to gently handle a rooster on a daily basis to establish that you are the flock leader (Alpha) and maintain a well-socialized companion.

The hens spend their time scratching for food, dust bathing, preening, playing and napping. Hens begin to lay eggs at about 6 months of age. Hens in the wild produce only a few clutches of eggs a year for the sole purpose of reproduction. Domesticated hens have been bred to lay one egg a day, but by 18 months of age, egg-laying frequency generally diminishes, and many adult or senior hens stop laying altogether.

Chickens are sociable, cheerful and intelligent creatures who can form lifelong bonds with each other and other species including humans, dogs and cats. Because of their keen intelligence and instinctive physical activity, they need a stimulating environment that mimics as much as possible the rich and diverse world nature designed them to enjoy.

COOP, PEN, RANGE/ EXERCISE YARD

“Housing and infrastructure. The primary purpose of poultry housing is to protect flocks against adverse weather and predators (coyote, fox, stray dogs, raccoons and raptors). Weather is of critical concern in the Upper Midwest, where summers can be extremely hot and winters bitterly cold. Housing must provide shade from sun and cover from rain. It must be able to withstand high winds and snow loads if it is to be used for year-round operation. These basic housing considerations apply to all poultry.”

-Poultry Your Way: A Guide to Management Alternatives for the Upper Midwest, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, 2005

COOP: *The house, closed structure or enclosed room which provides shelter from cold, heat, wind, rain, snow and predators for protected roosting, nesting, feeding and watering space.*

Construction & Materials – Coops can be purchased ready made or in kits, constructed within an existing structure or built from scratch. Local building codes should be followed to prevent damage from snow, wind, etc. **NOTE:** rabbit hutches, plastic igloos, dog houses and such are not appropriate structures.

Required features:

Size: 4 sq. feet of floor space minimum is required per bird for the interior (an area 2 ft x 2 ft per bird). So, four birds will need a coop with an inside floor space of at least 4 ft x 4 ft, not including nest boxes. Outside dimensions should be about 5 ft x 5 ft x 6 ft high. Overcrowding is the most common cause of behavior problems, injury and disease. Coops should be high enough for a human to stand up comfortably for cleaning, maintenance and egg collection. It also allows for additional roosting. Temperament and social structures should be taken into account, and partitions should be available for birds who are sick, injured or lower in the pecking order.

Access to electricity: This is required in free standing structures.

Floor: The floor should not collect and hold moisture, should be easy to clean, should retain heat in cold weather and should exclude rodents/predators. A dirt floor draws heat away and is not easy to clean or to rodent/predator-proof. A wood floor is adequate, provided it is at least a foot off the ground, insulated and sealed properly— but it is difficult to sanitize because it is porous. A concrete floor is ideal since it discourages rodents/predators and is easy to sanitize. Regardless of the floor type, bedding strewn on the surface is needed to absorb moist fecal matter and facilitate cleaning. Leaves or wood shavings work best and can be composted or easily bagged and disposed of as solid waste.

Walls- Materials that are resistant to moisture and mold and easily cleaned are best. Chemically treated materials should be nontoxic. A good compound with anti fungal agents is good for humid areas. Clear varnish is also good. Everything should be treated or painted before it is assembled. Wooden structures should be draft free and built with double walls that have at least 1 1/2 inch insulation layer between them.

Roof: The coop roof should be made of a material that will not collect and hold heat and should be built with double walls that have at least 1 1/2 inch insulated layer between them. The roof surface should be covered with an insulating tar paper to protect it from heavy rains. The roof should be slightly inclined, to allow water to run off. An overhang at the front wall will protect from downpours. A few small openings along the eaves allow moisture to escape and provide fresh air.

Doors: One human-sized door is needed for daily access. Doors for chickens should be just large enough for the largest bird and can be positioned anywhere from ground level to about 2 feet high with a stable ramp with cleats. Chickens are ground dwellers, not parrots—small doors at heights greater than 3 feet with flimsy, unstable ladders are not appropriate. Doors must be able to be secured against predators at night.

Windows: Chickens love windows and need natural light. Double glaze for warmth. Cover with 1/2" metal screen so they can be opened for ventilation in hot weather. Allow one square foot of window for each 10 square feet of floor space.

Roosts: Lumber or branches can be used. They should be strong enough and mounted securely enough to hold all birds. The surface should be rough for good grip with no splinters or sharp edges. For medium sized birds, 2" or 4" flat or 1 1/2" diameter is best for foot comfort. The longer the roost, the better it will prevent competition. They should be set 18" from the wall, 2 -3 feet off the floor. If mounted higher, rung steps are needed, spaced 8-12 inches apart. The addition of a dropping board underneath and an elevated roost will collect droppings and keep floor space below clean and inhabitable.

Climate: Shelters should be kept at a comfortable temperature for the animals. According to the Minn. Dept. of Agriculture, "Minimum Temperature 55°F , maximum temperature 70°F." (Ibid.)

The coop should be heated to maintain a temperature above 32° F during the coldest part of the winter and cooled below 85° F in the hottest part of the summer.

Below 32° F, birds are uncomfortable and cannot maintain body temperature. Below 15°F, frostbite begins, and hypothermia increases. Oil- or water-filled safety heaters (i.e. brands Pelonis, DeLonghi, Honeywell) are completely closed, sealed systems that run on electricity. The oil is heated from within and the heat is radiant, so there are no exposed heating elements to create dangerous problems even if they tip over. Heat lamps should only be used with extreme caution and should be firmly attached at least 3 feet from animals and far from any flammable item, especially dry straw or bedding. Smoke alarms are highly recommended. Extra bedding should be available to keep animals warm and comfortable in cold seasons.

Between 75° and 85° F, panting and dehydration begin; above 85° F, heat stress and danger of heat prostration increases.

Ventilation: Doors, windows and vents near the ceiling supply oxygen, remove heat from breathing, remove moisture from breath and droppings, remove harmful gasses and dust particles, and dilute disease-causing, airborne organisms. Fans should be provided for hottest weather.

Light: Natural light from windows and/or skylights are required. Can be supplemented with full spectrum incandescent light to follow normal seasonal light cycles and for cleaning and maintenance. The minimum light intensity you should provide should be enough to clearly see the hens feed when standing over the feeder.

Feeders: Food receptacles should be made of non-corrosive material that is easily cleaned, minimizes spillage, prevents contamination with droppings and keeps food dry. The containers should be large enough for all the birds to comfortably eat at once or numerous enough to prevent competition or intimidation. Large, heavy, rubber feed buckets work nicely. Hanging dishes or feeders work as well and should be hung at about the level of the bird's back. If dishes are outside the coop, they should be set under an overhang to keep them dry when it rains.

Waterers: Water receptacles should be made of non-corrosive material that can be cleaned and disinfected with a solution of chlorine bleach, prevent contamination with droppings and is spill and leak proof. The containers should be large enough for all the birds to comfortably drink at once and hold enough water for all birds for an entire day. They should be slightly positioned higher than the feeder or far enough away to prevent contamination with food.

Nestboxes- One nest box is needed for every 3 hens. A 12"W x 12"D x 14"H box is most versatile. Chickens prefer wooden nest boxes with covered opening for privacy placed on or as low to the floor as possible. If set higher, they require a perch in front of the opening. They should be filled with 2-4 inches of straw, litter, or grass. They prefer to nest in the southeast corner of the structure whenever possible.

PEN: *The pen is a fenced area surrounding the coop that provides secure access to exercise, sunlight, earth and vegetation and is freely available to the birds when they are unsupervised. It is constructed to prevent the birds' escape and prevents entry by intruders/predators.*

Construction & Materials – Kennel pens can be purchased ready-made or in kits, or built from scratch. Local building codes should be followed to prevent damage from snow, wind, etc. Temperament and social structures of flock should be taken into account, and partitions should be available for birds who are sick, injured or lower in the pecking order.

Required features:

Size: 10 sq. feet of floor space (an area of 3 ft x 3.3 ft) minimum per bird is required, so 4 birds will need floor space of at least 6 feet x 7 feet. If the coop is adjacent to the pen, at least a 6 x 12 foot space in a yard is needed. If the coop is elevated 2 feet so the chickens can use the space underneath, the coop and pen can occupy some, but not all, of the same footprint. Having most of the pen in deep shade all of the time is conducive to unhealthy bacterial and fungal development. The pen should be high enough for you to stand up comfortably for cleaning, maintenance, capture and also to allow for additional roosting.

Substrate: Choose a well-drained area. Substrate material for the pen should be clean, nontoxic, biodegradable, readily available, inexpensive and replaceable. Since it will become compacted from little feet and contaminated by concentrated droppings and parasites, it will need to be raked out and

replaced frequently to reduce odor and fly activity. Play-sand, leaves, municipal wood chips, sod and hard-wearing ground cover work well.

Metal fencing / predator control: The type of fencing depends on what the most likely predators are in your area. Dogs, rats, raccoons, hawks and coyotes are the most prevalent in city neighborhoods, but others include fox, mink, opossum, bobcats, snakes, weasels, ferrets, fisher and marten. It's best to build the strongest deterrents possible. Chain-link panels or welded or woven fencing on a sturdy frame, reinforced at the bottom with small-mesh metal wire that prevents predators from tunneling under the fence will discourage most intruders. Regular inspection is the key to security.

Gate: A gate is needed for easy human access.

Cover: The pen should be covered to keep birds in and predators out. The type of covering needed will depend on the type of predators. Covering part of the pen with a roof such as corrugated fiberglass can provide shade and rain shelter.

Windbreak: Providing a wind and snow break will give the birds a protected area to be outdoors even in winter.

Shade: Shade must be available and can be provided by vegetation or strategically placed materials.

Dust bath: Taking a dust bath is the closest thing to heaven for a chicken. They derive pleasure and contentment by bathing in the sun and in loose, dry soil depressions in the dirt, which cleans their feathers and rids them of parasites. Birds will usually dig their own hole for dust baths. Keep the soil in the dust bath loose, and add play-sand if it is a heavy clay soil. Adding a little poultry dust, diatomaceous earth or wood ash increases the effectiveness of parasite control. Large, heavy rubber feed buckets filled with play-sand are a welcome addition to the indoor coop in the winter.

Enrichment furnishings: There is nothing sadder than a barren pen, when compared to the rich jungle environment chickens evolved in. Lots of large branches, stumps or platforms provide places to go and things to do, and they look natural and attractive in the pen. Include bushes, boxes or other objects to sit in or hide behind. Plant kale or other safe, edible vegetation around the outside of the pen for forage. Overcrowding, boredom and barren pens are the most common causes of behavioral problems.

RANGE/ EXERCISE YARD: *The larger fenced area like a backyard that provides ample space for safe exercise, forage, sunlight, earth and vegetation that is regularly available to the birds when supervised.* For regular exercise, 174 sq. ft per bird (an area about 10 ft x 17 ft per bird) is required. Four birds will need access to a 40 ft x 70 ft fenced area in the yard. If there is no access to a larger range/ exercise yard, 16 sq. feet of floor space minimum per bird (an area 4 ft x 4 ft per bird) in the pen must be provided.

Fencing: 6 feet of privacy fencing prevents and discourages uninvited human and animal visitors. It also promotes the safety and security of the birds and neighbors.

Nontoxic plants: Chickens are inquisitive and voracious eaters of vegetation and many ornamental garden plants can be toxic to them. Learn which of your plants might be harmful and fence them off or better yet replace them with safe and nutritious plants.

Security: Chickens are susceptible to theft, vandalism and predators and need to be securely shut in the coop at night. Security cameras, lights and baby monitors are also highly recommended deterrents.

PROVIDING GOOD CARE

FOOD / WATER

Fresh food and water are required daily and should be available at all times. Hay, grain and prepared feed should be fresh—less than one year old and free of mold, insects or other contaminants. Daily intake should include: 60 % nutritionally balanced, prepared feed appropriate for the age of bird, 20% scratch (cracked corn, oats, black oil sunflower seeds, milo, barley) 20% fresh (nutritious foods and table scraps—caution, toxic: onion, avocados, chocolate). Supplements: oyster shell or limestone for calcium, granite grit for digestion, mineral salt or ground salt licks. Chickens drink 1-2 cups of water a day.

Feed should be stored inside rodent-proof containers in a cool, dry area inaccessible to animals. Stored feedbags should be rotated to ensure that feed is always fresh. Food that is uneaten or spilled should be removed from animal enclosures daily.

SOCIAL NEEDS

Temperament and social structures of animals should be taken into account, and separate areas should be provided for incompatible birds.

VET CARE

Locate a veterinary clinic nearby that will see chickens before one is needed—preferably one that specializes in avian care. Chickens are welcome in increasing numbers of city clinics. Check vet backgrounds at <http://www.vetmed.state.mn.us/Default.aspx?tabid=803>.

Have an isolation area or roomy carrier and heating pad for sick or injured birds. Critical/emergency first aid supplies should be kept, including roll gauze, gauze pads, tape, vet wrap, blood-stop powder, antibiotic ointment, antibacterial scrub and solution, and bandage scissors.

SANITATION

Manure and wet bedding should be removed from the coop and animal feeding and lounging areas daily. Thorough, complete cleaning of walls and perches, removal of all bedding, and disinfecting of the coop and furnishings should be done at least once a year. Keeping shelter areas clean and dry will help prevent bacteria, fungi, insects, rodents, etc. Rodent levels will be minimized by keeping all feed in rodent-proof containers and removing spilled or uneaten food promptly. Litter can be double bagged and disposed of as solid waste or composted, but composting must be done in an area where chickens will not scratch for at least a year.

Housing animals in spacious, clean and relatively dust-free environments will keep them healthy and will minimize human exposure to infectious disease.

Sources:

Poultry Your Way: A Guide to Management Alternatives for the Upper Midwest, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, 2005

Standards of Care for Chickens, Adapted from Standards of Care for Farmed Animals, The Association Of Sanctuaries (TAOS). Edited by Chicken Run Rescue. 6/2008, revised 4/7/09

Poultry Housing Considerations for Low Input Small Scale Producers, David Sullenberger, TimeWarrior Farm Chronicle Special Reports, Revision E, fall 2003

Building Chicken Coops: Storey Country Wisdom Bulletin A-224, Gail Damerow, 1999

Chicken Health Handbook, Gail Damerow, 1994

REQUIREMENTS FOR KEEPING CHICKENS

The Permit for keeping chickens and other domestic fowl is contingent on your meeting responsibilities to your neighbors and the birds. Our department so often sees animals in inappropriate settings. Before going further, please read the enclosed CHICKEN CARE SHEET. Consider the commitment needed with regard to the lifespan, cost, time, space, location, and other consequences of caring for chickens. Next, consider the kind of impact they may have on your neighborhood. You must provide sufficient control so that their presence will not disturb neighbors with property damage, activity, noise, odor or trespass. You must keep your property clean and maintained in a manner that prevents insect and rodent infestations. Finally, consider the birds themselves. Are you willing to assume a long term commitment to them? They must be provided with food, water shelter and veterinary care. They also need kindness and personal attention.

COOP: *The house, closed structure or enclosed room which provides shelter from cold, heat, wind, rain, snow and predators for protected roosting, nesting, feeding and watering space.*

size: 4 sq. feet interior floor space minimum per bird (an area 2 ft. x 2 ft. per bird).

access to electricity

floor: wood- 1 ft. off the ground, insulated / sealed or concrete

bedding: clean, absorbent, nontoxic, biodegradable and replaceable material

walls: varnished, treated or painted draft free double walls 1 1/2 inch insulation

roof: will not collect / hold heat, min. 1-1/2 inch insulation, insulating tar paper, inclined, vents

doors: 1 human-size, 1 bird door 0-2 ft. high, stable ramp, secure latch

windows: 1 square foot of window per 10 square foot of floor space

roosts: 1 1/2 diameter or greater, 18" from wall, 2 -3 feet off the floor.

climate control: heater, fan, ventilation to maintain temperature 32° min.- 85° max. F

light: full spectrum, windows and/or skylights, incandescent light or other to follow normal seasonal light cycles.

feeders/ waterers: non corrosive, clean, size and number sufficient, accessible for all birds

nestboxes- 1 per 3 hens, bedding

PEN: *The fenced area surrounding the coop that provides secure access to exercise, sunlight, earth and vegetation and is freely available to the birds when they are unsupervised. It is constructed to prevent the bird's escape and prevents entry by intruders/predators.*

size: 10 sq. ft of floor space minimum per bird (an area 3 ft. x 3.3 ft per bird)

substrate: well drained area; clean, nontoxic, biodegradable and replaceable matter

metal fencing and gate / predator control: sufficient to keep birds in/predators out

cover: sufficient to keep birds in/predators out

windbreak, shade, dustbath, enrichment furnishings (ie. branches, stumps or platforms bushes, boxes)

RANGE/ EXERCISE YARD: *The larger fenced area like a backyard that provides ample space for safe exercise, forage, sunlight, earth and vegetation that is regularly available to the birds when supervised.*

size: 174 sq. ft per bird (an area about 10 ft. x 17 ft per bird)

If no access to a larger Range/ Exercise Yard, pen must provide 16 sq. ft. of floor space minimum per bird (an area 4 ft. x 4 ft per bird)

fencing: 6 ft privacy fencing

FOOD / WATER: Fresh food and water daily, calcium supplement, grit, stored in rodent proof containers, uneaten / spilled removed daily.

SOCIAL: separate areas provided for incompatible birds.

VET CARE: designated veterinary clinic, isolation area

SANITATION- manure/wet bedding removed daily; clean / disinfect coop and furnishings annually. Soiled litter double bagged for solid waste or composted in an area inaccessible to chickens for at least a year.