

Model Ordinance for Keeping Rabbits in an Urban setting

Rabbit Education Society 2015

There is growing popularity to allow for raising chickens in an urban setting. The reasons for this trend include making the urban area more sustainable and bringing an awareness of our relationship to the food cycle as well as allowing residents the pleasure of raising animals. What is often overlooked is allowing for the keeping of Rabbits and the recognition that Rabbits are not chickens and in many ways are more suitable to the urban setting.

In 2010 a survey was done regarding chicken ordinances in cities. The cities included in the survey had enacted ordinances allowing for the keeping of chickens between 2005 and 2009. The survey found most cities were satisfied with their ordinances. "Major complaints and infractions were rare, and the adoption of chicken ordinances have been looked upon positively."¹ The cities survey reported that chickens getting loose was not a problem with one city reporting after adoption of the ordinance it actually reduced complaints about loose chickens. More than half reported zero violations of the ordinance. As far as complaints go the survey found 68% reported 0-2 complaints. Two reported between 5-10 complaints, 3 cities reported 12, 32, and 115 complaints respectively. Some cities reported that the ordinance actually brought many citizens into compliance with the law and the rules served to relieve tension in the community.

When one compares rabbits and chickens you find rabbits have numerous advantages over chickens. For one rabbits do not make noise. Rabbits are also commonly kept confined in cages so running at large is not an issue and they need less space than chickens. Rabbits do not create as much odor as chickens and rabbit manure can be applied directly to plants to be used as fertilizer.

Ordinance No.

Purpose

Whereas the keeping of Rabbits in the city supports a local, sustainable food system by providing an affordable, nutritious source of protein. the keeping of Rabbits also provide free, quality nitrogen rich fertilizer, animal companionship and pleasure, less noise, mess and expense than dogs and cats² Allowing the keeping of Domestic Rabbits not only makes the city more sustainable but also brings increased awareness of our relationship to the food cycle.³

¹ Chicken Ordinance Survey Hugh Bartling DePaul University

² Milwaukee City Council ordinance

³ Residential Urban Chicken Keeping An Examination of 25 Cities Spring 2008 KT LaBadie

The purpose of this article is to provide standards for the keeping of domesticated Rabbits. It is intended to enable residents to keep a number of rabbits on a non-commercial basis while limiting the potential adverse impacts on the surrounding neighborhood.⁴

Section 1: It shall be unlawful for any person to permit or allow any domesticated Rabbit to run at large within the corporate limits of the city. It shall be lawful to keep herds of rabbits of any size in the agricultural and residential zones of the city, so long as they are confined.⁵ This ordinance allows rabbit keeping as a permitted use in single-family and two-family zoning districts.

Section 2: Rabbitries shall be allowed under the following conditions:

- a. Rabbit Husbandry Standards as defined by the Rabbit Education Society are to be applied to rabbit breeders
- b. There shall be no outside slaughtering of Rabbits.⁶ This will prevent neighbor complaints about the process.
- c. Rabbit enclosures must be kept in a neat and sanitary condition at all times, in a manner that will not disturb the use or enjoyment of neighboring lots due to noise, odor, or other adverse impacts, and must be cleaned on a regular basis so as to prevent offensive odors.⁷
- d. The property owner shall take necessary action to reduce the attraction of predators and rodents.
- e. Provision must be made for storage and removal of manure. All stored manure shall be covered by a fully enclosed structure with roof or lid over the entire structure. All other manure not used for composting or fertilizing shall be removed on a monthly basis.⁸
- f. Rabbit enclosures shall be a minimum of 10 feet distance from property lines.
- g. There shall be no minimum distance required from the property's primary residence as rabbits do not present any public health concerns.

Section 3: Enforcement⁹

The administration of the provisions of this article shall be the responsibility of the Town Council and shall be carried out in the following manner:

- A. A written complaint must be filed with the city council
- B. A notice shall be sent to the owner of the animal reported to be in violation of the provisions of this article, or to the owner and/or occupant of the premises where upon said violation exists.
- C. The notice shall state:

⁴ See above

⁵ See above

⁶ Milwaukee City Council & Rogers AK

⁷ Milwaukee City Council

⁸ See above

⁹ Shady Acres TX ordinance

1. The nature of the violation, and
2. The amount of time given to correct said violation.

B. If the violation is not corrected within the specified time period, a complaint shall be filed in Municipal Court for the violation of this article.