

**Directed to:** Mayor Joe Preston and Members of City Council

**Meeting Date:**  
April 7, 2025

**Department:** Planning & Building Services

**Attachment**

**Prepared By:** Jim McCoomb, Manager of Planning Services

**Subject:** Keeping of Backyard Hens – Follow Up Report

**Recommendation:**

THAT: Report PD-13-2025 relating to Keeping of Backyard Hens be received for information; and further,

THAT: Council resolve not to permit the keeping of backyard hens.

**Background:**

At its March 6, 2023, meeting Council received correspondence from a resident requesting that Council consider allowing backyard hens/chickens. Council provided direction to staff to prepare a report on a potential pilot project relating to the keeping of backyard hens/chickens, which was submitted at the April 11, 2023, meeting (report PD-10-2023). Council directed staff to prepare the term of reference for a pilot project.

While preparing a report for the pilot project, staff determined that there were a number of issues associated with introducing backyard hens/chickens as a permitted use. These included:

- The City Animal Services Centre confirmed that they are not set up to handle chickens in the event that birds need to be confiscated or impounded due to abuse or sickness;
- Only 2 practicing vets locally specialize in food animals including small flock chickens, and this limited availability of veterinarians accredited to care for hens to advise persons who have backyard hens on control for health risks is of concern;
- The cancellation of the City of Toronto pilot project citing significant costs and staff time, and concerns related to avian influenza;
- Escalating cases of avian influenza in the southwestern Ontario region.

Avian influenza continues to be the foremost concern regarding the keeping of backyard hens/chickens. The disease is spreading in wild bird populations, and statistics published by the Canadian Government state that there are several currently active cases in the local area involving poultry operations, including in Middlesex Centre, North Middlesex and Oxford County. Given this situation, and the other issues/concerns noted above, staff are recommending that Council table this matter indefinitely.

**Strategic Priority:**

Strategic Pillar: Excellence in All We Do - Priority #1: Public Safety and Community Well-being

**Financial Impact:**

N/A

Respectfully,



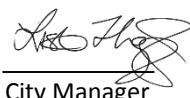
Jim McCoomb, MCIP RPP  
Manager of Planning Services

**Reviewed By:**



Planning

**Approved By:**



City Manager