

District of North Vancouver to study backyard chickens

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Nine-year-old Ben Dymant has asked the District of North Vancouver to allow backyard chickens like the Americana he holds here, from a flock of friendly fowl in the City of North Vancouver. photo Paul McGrath, North Shore News

District of North Vancouver council is taking a farm-fresh look at its bylaw that bans backyard chickens.

The request came Monday night from the Canadian Liberated Urban Chicken Klub, or CLUCK, a group advocating for backyard hens.

More than a source of fresh, organic eggs, the chickens provide natural fertilizer and aeration for gardens and the coops give residents a tangible connection to agriculture and a learning experience for the neighbourhoods that welcome them, the group argued.

"My mom says that food is expensive and we could eat their eggs. Eggs are a good source of protein and will help me to grow," said nine-year-old Ben Dymant, a CLUCK member who wants to be a farmer when he grows up.

Council was last asked to consider backyard chickens a half-dozen years ago but those plans were scrambled in a split vote. At issue for council at the time were concerns the coops would act as unwanted wildlife attractants and the chickens would end up poached by predators like cougars, bears and coyotes.

But, opposition to backyard chickens may no longer be so hard boiled. In 2012, CLUCK successfully lobbied City of North Vancouver council to amend its bylaws to allow up to eight backyard hens and earlier this year, chicken activists came out sunny side up in West Vancouver.

District council members were warm to the suggestion Monday night, although getting the animal control bylaw changed is something that may not go over easy, as many of the same concerns linger.

Public health and safety wouldn't need to be compromised, the CLUCK members argued, as long as owners are responsible.

The same could be said of policing - not needed as long as citizens are "responsible" - cjk

"The chicken coop will be safe from other wild animals like raccoons. I researched predators of chickens and bears were not even on the Top 10 list. Why does West Vancouver get chickens and we don't? Squamish has a lot of bears and they allow backyard chickens, so please, please, please can we be allowed chickens?" Dymont asked.

District staff are expected to research the bylaws in place for other communities that allow backyard chickens and report back at a later meeting.