CHICKENS IN OUR HOA

CITY OF LONGMONT AND HOA REGULATIONS AND GUIDANCE:

THE CITY ALLOWS CHICKENS & COOPS. NOT ALLOWED: DUCKS OR OTHER poultry or fowl including ducks, quail, geese, turkeys, or pigeons, in districts not zoned agricultural.

[IMPORTANT TO NOTE, HOA RULES ARE GENERALLY MORE RESTRICTIVE THAN CITY ORDINANCES REGARDING CHICKENS. EVEN IF THE CITY ORDINANCE ALLOWS CHICKENS, AN HOA'S GOVERNING DOCUMENTS MAY PROHIBIT THEM AND HOA RULES WILL TAKE PRECEDENCE. Even if your City allows chickens, your HOA can enforce its own prohibitions leaving you legally bound by their regulations.
HOAs are private governing bodies. Purchasing a home within an HOA community means you agree to abide by their rules, even if they are more restrictive than local laws.

HOA REGULATIONS THAT IMPACT BACKYARD CHICKENS:

1) Animal Restrictions – HOAs may limit pets to traditional domesticated animals like cats and dogs, explicitly banning livestock, including chickens;

2) Noise Regulations – Hens can be chatty, leading to noise restrictions;

3) Aesthetic Concerns – Some HOAs regulate structures visible from the street or neighbors' properties, including chicken coops;

4) Sanitation and Odor Control – Concerns over waste accumulation and potential smells may lead to outright bans. The chickens must be properly cared for so they are not obnoxious or offensive due to noise, odor, or unsanitary conditions;

5) Lot Size Requirements – Some communities require a certain amount of space between coops and neighboring homes to minimize disturbances;

6) Chickens cannot be kept or bred for commercial purposes, meaning they cannot be kept to sell their eggs or meat;

7) The chickens must be kept in their coop or enclosure and cannot run loose onto other lots or common areas;

8) As with any other pet, chickens must comply with the remaining provisions of the governing documents. If there are issues surrounding the chickens, then an HOA could take enforcement action against the owner, which may include levying a fine after notice and a hearing or seeking to remove the problem chicken, depending on the enforcement authority in the governing documents.

If the HOA's governing documents prohibit chickens, homeowners cannot keep chickens even if their local government permits them. Many HOA governing documents still restrict chickens, also referred to as livestock or poultry.

Chickens may also be prohibited by nuisance restrictions contained in the governing documents. The noise produced by chickens along with frequent, malodorous, and non-solid waste arguably constitute an ongoing violation of nuisance restrictions sufficient to require the chickens' removal.

CHICKEN LAWS IN COLORADO ARE SHAPED BY ZONING, LOT SIZE AND HOUSING DENSITY AND, LOCAL CONCERNS ABOUT NOISE, CLEALINESS AND WILDLIFE:

1) A backyard chicken permit application costs $30 as of 2026. Applicants must submit a completed application along with a plot/sketch plan detailing coop dimensions, locations including setbacks.

The application must be filled out completely before submission. *The City of Longmont restricts the total number of active chicken permits to 50 at any given time.*

2) **Chicken coops must be located in the rear of property. The City of Longmont sets a 6' setback from the lot boundary and AT LEAST a 6' placement from any other structures. If the coop is closer than 6' to any side and/or rear property line, the Owner must have written consent from the adjacent property owner(s). In the event of a complaint about the placement of the coop, the Owner must provide the letter from the adjacent property owner agreeing to its placement.**

3) **Per City of Longmont Law - THE COOP CANNOT BE MOBILE AND MUST BE A "FIXED, PERMANENT STRUCTURE"**

4) ***For coops built AFTER February 2009, absolutely NO setback variances are allowed, even with the written consent from adjacent property owners.*** *For coops built prior to 2009, if there is a complaint about the placement of the coop, the Owner MUST provide the letter from the adjacent property owner agreeing to its placement.*

5) Living in an area with cold winters, it is best to place the chicken coop in a location that will get sunlight in the winter, even if it means less shade in the summer. Often, placing the chicken coop facing south and near deciduous shade trees should offer a perfect blend of environments. Colorado can get cold and heat lamps are often required to keep the chickens warm.

6) Avoid placing a chicken coop in areas prone to flooding, near dense vegetation that can harbor predators, or in spots that are too close to neighbors or children's play areas. Also, steer clear of areas with overhanging branches, which can attract raptors. Consider the ground surface: avoid rocky or uneven areas and ensure the location is not in direct sunlight without shade.

7) Chickens must have food and water at all times. [See comment concerning standing water under Cons - 10a below.]

8) **Per the City of Longmont, backyard chicken hens may not free-range and are restricted to the coop and run. The restriction on free-ranging may be waived with written permission from all abutting property owners.** *If the Owner still intends to free-range the chickens, the Owner must have written consent from all abutting property owners.* ***In the event of a complaint over free-ranging chickens, that Owner will be asked to supply a Code Compliance Officer with written proof from all of the abutting neighbors that chickens may free-range in the backyard of the Owner's property. The abutting neighbors' letters must be attached to the permit so that they may be presented to a Code Compliance Officer in the event they are requested.***

9) Chickens that are allowed to free-range require more space, ideally 100 sq. ft. per bird.

10) Outdoor Run Space – It's recommended to provide at least 10 square feet per chicken in an outdoor run.

NOTE: Backyard chickens who don't have enough space may:

a) Dirty their water more quickly, and will have less access to clean water (and will require the owner to replace their water more often);

b) Become aggressive with the other chickens;

c) Experience a drop in egg production (both in numbers and quality);

d) Feel Stressed;

e) Suffer from feather pecking;

f) Become more easily infected with disease.

11) **NO MORE THAN 4 CHICKEN HENS. NO ROOSTERS**.

12) IF chickens are killed by any animal while outside the backyard property, the animal will *NOT* be deemed an "aggressive animal" nor will the owner of that animal be charged. **IT IS THE SOLE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHICKEN OWNERS TO ENSURE THEIR CHICKENS DON'T LEAVE THEIR PROPERTY**. ***Section 7.04.190 of city statute.***

13) **Chicken Coops are limited to a MAXIMUM TOTAL SIZE of 120 sq. ft. [includes both coop and run] and must be PREDATOR PROOF with a SOLID TOP.**

14) **At LEAST 4 sq. ft. per chicken shall be provided including the coop and run.**

15) Coops shall ***NOT*** **be taller than 7' at highest point of the roof**.

16) ******All coops shall be regularly cleaned to control dust, order and waste to not constitute a nuisance, safety hazard or health problem to surrounding properties**.

17) Per the City of Longmont, absolutely NO slaughtering is allowed. In Longmont, dead chickens must be taken to a licensed veterinarian for cremation or disposed of at a rendering plant outside city limits. This is in accordance with local regulations that prohibit slaughtering chickens within the city.

a) Veterinarian Service – Dead chickens should be taken to a licensed veterinarian for cremation;

b) Rendering Plants – Alternatively, chickens can be disposed of at a rendering plant located outside the city limits;

c) Permit Requirements – Keeping chickens requires a permit, and disposal must comply with local animal control regulations.

NOTE: Some folks will never want to terminate a chicken, especially if they have kept it around for four or five years, and maybe named it, and collected eggs from it during the laying-period of its life. But after many years, sometimes you end up with a chicken that stops producing any eggs. What will you do with that chicken? Keep it "in retirement" for the rest of its life? Culling chickens from time to time may become an integral part of your overall management program. However, there are other issues that need to be considered. The City of Longmont forbids the slaughtering of chickens. Beyond that, the neighbors may feel strongly about how, or why, you choose to cull your flock. It is something to take into consideration at the beginning of the backyard chicken project.

CONSEQUENCES OF IMPROPER DISPOSAL OF DEAD CHICKENS:

Improper chicken disposal can lead to severe environmental and health risks, including the spread of diseases and contamination of soil and water sources. When dead chickens are not disposed of correctly, they can become breeding grounds for harmful pathogens, posing significant public health concerns.

- **Disease Spread -** Improper disposal can lead to the transmission of diseases like salmonella and E. coli;
- **Environmental Contamination** — Dead chickens can contaminate soil and water, leading to broader ecological issues;
- **Public Health Risks** — The presence of decomposing poultry can attract pests and create health hazards for nearby communities;
- **Economic Impact** — Cleanup and management of improperly disposed waste can incur significant costs.

18) **Chicken feed must be stored in a resealable airtight, metal, rat-proof container to discourage attracting mice, rats and other vermin.**

19) The City of Longmont mandates regular cleaning of the coop to avoid complaints of strong odors. The Owner will want to keep the coop clean anyway to keep mites, lice and rodents at bay for health of the flock.

    Chicken droppings should be cleaned from coops daily to maintain hygiene and prevent health issues. Regular cleaning helps control odors and keeps the environment safe for the chickens:

    a) Daily Cleaning – Droppings should be removed daily to prevent buildup and odors;

    b) Spot-Cleaning – A quick spot-clean can be done every few days if daily cleaning isn't feasible;

    c) Health Benefits – Regular removal of droppings reduces the risk of disease and parasites in chickens;

    d) Bedding Maintenance – Along with Droppings, bedding should be refreshed weekly to maintain a clean environment.

20) The permit may be revoked upon conviction of the permit holder of violating of the Longmont Municipal Code Section 7.04.

CONS/DISADVANTAGES FOR HOA BACKYARD CHICKENS:

1) **Noise factor. Chickens are very noisy. Most HOAs have nuisance policies that disallow noise up to a certain volume or during certain hours of the day.** Chickens with their clucking and cackling, can be a constant (24 hr.) source of annoyance for neighbors. [The decibel level of chickens is 60-70 decibels, the level similar to the volume of human conversation!] Chickens as a rule do not create a lot of early morning noise; however, as the day warms up, they will become more active and noisier.

2) **Chicken droppings are smelly giving off a strong ammonia scent.** Droppings don't always come in solid form, taking on a more liquid-like form and owners can inconspicuously step on them, dragging them all over the place. **Chickens create A LOT OF WASTE!** The terrible smell wafting through the neighborhood can irritate and repel residents

3) Even if chicken coops are kept in the backyards, they may still be visible from certain angles or streets. Not all chicken coops look great. Some are haphazardly constructed while others don't fit with the overall aesthetic of the community.

4) Possibility of Escaped Chickens - If a chicken escapes from the coop and runs out onto the street, it can create a host of problems. They may run into other people who might be put off by the chickens. They may also encounter neighbors' pets and get into nasty fights with them.

5) Unwanted Pests: **The presence of coops can attract unwanted animals including rodents in search of food scraps or chicken feed.**

6) **Apart from rodents, chickens can also attract other wild animals such as coyotes, mountain lions, foxes, raccoons and other predators**…which can be quite dangerous to humans as well. Front Range backyards commonly see red-tailed hawks and other raptors, red foxes, raccoons, coyotes, skunks, and weasels, all of which can threaten unsecured flocks.

7) Feed, bedding and vet bills can add up. When you factor in that cost alongside potential losses from disease or predators, it's clear that raising backyard chickens requires more than just a desire for fresh eggs.

8) Chickens are susceptible to a range of illnesses that can affect not just your birds, but potentially your family too. Diseases such as salmonella can be transmitted through improper handling of eggs or contaminated droppings or touching the chickens and the places where they live and roam. If chicken care is performed by the entire family, ensure everyone understands the importance of good hygiene. Washing hands thoroughly after dealing with the chickens is non-negotiable.

9) With more prevalence of chickens in the HOAs, HOAs are frequently encountering owners allowing their chickens to go to a road with them or, to a common area alongside the family dog.

10) **Food, Water and Chicken Waste: Food and water issues usually fall under "nuisance" laws. While one Owner may take great care of the chicken and coop maintenance, there in the future will always be just one.**

    a) Issues like **standing water** which is not kept fresh can be **a breeding ground for mosquitoes**;

    b) **Scattered feed which is not consumed** by the chickens **will attract rodents**;

c) **Chicken waste can create an issue when the neighbors complain about unpleasant smells.** On a farm, it is common to place a chicken coop some small distance from the family home taking into consideration prevailing winds. **In a suburb, it is likely that down-wind to the chicken owner's home is directly up-wind to someone else**.

These issues when allowed to go unaddressed can become violations of either local laws or HOA regulations.

11) **Threat of Avian Influenza Outbreaks**:

a) No bird feeders for wild birds near the chicken areas;

b) Secure coop and chicken runs so they can't be accessed by wild birds or rodents;

c) Wear dedicated shoes to tend the chickens and don't wear anywhere else…or use shoe covers;

d) No contact with other birds;

e) If you visit another flock, be sure to disinfect your shoes, clothes and hands afterward.

IF THE HOA CONSIDERS ALLOWING CHICKEN/COOPS, ITEMS TO CONSIDER:

1) **Allow Quiet Chickens**. To prevent noisy chickens, **consider limiting the type of chickens owners can keep.** Some breeds are quieter such as Rhode Island Red hens, the Wyandotte, and the Orpington chicken. DISALLOW LOUD CHICKEN BREEDS such as Polish hens and Easter Egg hens. Totally eliminate Roosters as they are particularly loud. [Roosters already disallowed by Longmont.]

2) **Impose a Limit.** May want to limit the number of chickens to prevent overcrowding, more noise and increased smells. [Longmont has a limit of 4 chickens].

3) **An HOA Can Regulate Chicken Coop Design.** The HOA Design Guidelines may regulate the design of chicken coops as to size and design and the colors the coop is painted such as matching those of the owner's house.

THE COOP CANNOT BE MOBILE AND MUST BE A "FIXED, PERMANENT STRUCTURE". - City of Longmont Law.

a) Owners must complete an application and submit plans/sketches of the coop/runs to the Design Committee for approval prior to submission to the City of Longmont;

b) The Owner must submit additional documents or photographs of the design they have in mind.

4) **HOAs may restrict where coops can be placed on the property**, often requiring them to be in the backyard or away from the front of the property.

5) **Outline Homeowner Responsibility**.

a) Waste management. How should owners dispose of the droppings and other waste? What are the Local Ordinances? In winter, gardens are not active and therefore not in need of fertilizer/chicken droppings.

b) Owners must keep chickens in their coops at all times. If they must release them, they must be under close supervision so they don't escape into the streets or other homes.

c) Install a perimeter fence. NOTE: CHICKENS CAN FLY SHORT DISTANCES AND A 4' FENCE WON'T PROHIBIT ESCAPE. IT IS SUGGESTED THAT FENCE HEIGHT BE 6'. Does Creekside allow a 6' fence for a chicken coop? Colorado HOA policies regarding chicken coops require that the chicken coop be enclosed with a fence, and that the fencing materials be restricted to match existing fencing on the property.

6) **Chickens will not be in the coop all the time. They will want to get out and scratch in the dirt**.

a) Consideration for the chicken run will depend on the environment. **The run may need to include a wire-fence top if there are air-born predators in the area such as hawks and owls**.

b) AGAIN…The run must have a fence built around it and again, owners need to consider the height of the fence as chickens can fly.

c) **A significant factor will be neighborhood dogs and cats that *will see the chickens as legitimate prey. Many dogs find a fence to be only a minor inconvenience and most house cats will not be constrained by a fence at all.*** *The first time a neighbor is asked to pony up for the cost of replacing a chicken or a vet bill, they might start searching the HOA rules and By-Laws for a reason that the chickens have to go.*

7) Common with many HOAs in Colorado, **HOAs often have rules regarding the cleanliness of coops and runs, requiring regular cleaning to control dust, odor and waste.**

8) **Also common to Colorado HOA policies, noise restrictions may also be in place to prevent disturbance to neighbors.**

9) **As is common with many Colorado HOAs, slaughtering chickens on the property may be prohibited by HOA regulations**. Culling chickens from time to time may become an integral part of the chicken management program. The City prohibits the slaughtering of animals. The HOA may outright disallow the slaughtering of chickens as well.

10) Failure to Adhere to Local and HOA regulations may sour relationships with neighbors and also lead to fines or the removal of the chickens.

11) ***Recommendation for chicken coop protection:*** Place on a concrete slab to prevent any predators from digging under the coop to access the chickens. Protect the coop with a 16 gauge galvanized hardware cloth to prevent predators from attempting to claw or chew through the wire. Keep the doors locked at night using a carbineer that is possum-proof. Inside the chicken coop are roosting bars. With a pull of a rope from outside, lift the bars which helps to secure the chickens' safety for the night.

PROS AND GUIDELINES FOR MAINTAINING BACKYARD CHICKENS:

1) Chickens are natural recyclers. Munching on kitchen scraps can help to reduce landfill waste. When appropriately composted, it's gold for the garden, enriching the soil and promoting plant growth contributing to a more sustainable lifestyle;

2) Backyard chickens are undoubtedly a charming addition to any home with their amusing antics and undeniable ability to turn the backyard into a minor amusement park. The chickens are surprisingly social and have personalities that rival even the most beloved pets;

3) Chickens are natural pest controllers, happily munching on insects like ticks, slugs, flies and, larvae;

4) Fresh eggs, knowing where the eggs come from and what your hens are eating. Backyard chickens provide a consistent supply of fresh eggs, often with better taste and quality than store-bought options;

5) Homemade fertilizer. Fertilizers all contain nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium and chicken manure contains all three, promoting healthier plant growth;

6) Educational Opportunities. Raising chickens can teach children about responsibility, biology and food sources, fostering educational growth;

7) A coop should be situated in a well-drained area that receives ample sunlight while providing shade. The coop itself must be well-vented;

   a) Sunlight: at least 3-4 hours of direct sunlight
   b) Drainage: elevated area to prevent water accumulation

8) Security is paramount – **use buried hardware cloth rather than chicken wire to deter digging predators;**

9) **Nesting Box should be at least 1 sq. ft. [12" x 12"] within the box per chicken and should be 1'-2' off the ground. The recommended coop space is around 3-4 sq. ft. per chicken & for the coop and run combined, about 10 sq. ft. per chicken to allow enough room to roam;**

10) **Chickens require CONSTANT ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER**. Waterers should be checked daily to ensure they are clean, full and free from contaminants. ***Dirty water can lead to the spread of disease.*** The water container should be scrubbed with a mild detergent and rinse thoroughly at regular intervals to prevent algae and bacterial growth;