

Village chicken ordinance adopted

Written by MARK JAEGER

Wednesday, 22 August 2012 16:37

Trustees allow residents to raise up to six birds, but stringent restrictions set on housing and care of poultry

After months of incubation, the Fredonia Village Board approved a detailed chicken ordinance last week.

With the action, the village becomes the first community in Ozaukee County to spell out the guidelines for the increasingly trendy practice of raising poultry in a residential area.

The lack of regulations came to light in April, when 13-year-old Trevor Krause approached the village for permission to raise chickens at his family's home on the Oakwood Forest subdivision.

Krause told officials he hoped to raise 10 egg-laying chickens at the home on Cedar Valley Road over the summer.

It took until almost the end of summer, but the approval finally came, although there are several more restrictions than the youngster originally envisioned.

Trustee Don Dohrwardt prepared the ordinance using wording from laws enacted in various communities around the state.

The preface for the ordinance said it was intended "to outline conditions under which village residents may safely keep or maintain a limited number of chickens, to assure appropriate chicken coops or structures in which to house the chickens and to protect the health, safety and welfare of the general population."

Reinforcing a previously stated stand made by officials, the ordinance specifies that it applies only to chickens and "does not include other kinds of fowl including but not limited to ducks, quail, pheasant, geese, turkeys, guinea hens, peacocks, emus or ostriches."

Before the ordinance wording was proposed, village officials held a public hearing with residents split between supporting the idea and being concerned about the problems fowl might cause in a residential area.

As trustees discussed Dohrwardt's proposed ordinance, it underwent some quick modifications.

Trustee Fritz Buchholtz objected to limiting the number of chickens allowed to four, asking that the maximum be raised to six birds.

A second amendment to the ordinance got a little technical, dealing with the typical maturation rate of chickens.

The male birds, i.e. roosters, can be kept until they are 10 weeks old, which avoids disruptive behavior linked to sexual maturity — such as crowing.

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The ordinance offers very detailed specifications for the coops needed to house the chickens. Those structures must allow at least six square feet per bird, but no more than 48 square feet, and be sufficiently enclosed to prevent hens from escaping.

Coops can be no closer than 10 feet from any lot line, twice as far as any other accessory structure, and at least 25 feet from any neighboring residence.

The sale of eggs and the slaughtering of poultry on premises is not allowed.

An annual permit, which costs \$15, is required for anyone who wants to raise chickens in the village. Permits will not be issued until all neighboring property owners have been notified.

Paul Krause, Trevor's father, said he was satisfied with the ordinance.

"I think it is very well done. It seems to capture a lot of the issues that were raised. I think it is a good ordinance, but obviously I am biased," Krause said.

Buchholtz joked that if the village was as detailed in its regulation of dogs as it is now with chickens, there would be virtually no dog complaints in the community.