



Date: March 6, 2012

To: Members of the Environmental Committee

From: Larry Rich, Sustainability Coordinator

Subject: Urban Agriculture Policy Study on the Keeping of Chickens, Goats & Bees

On October 18, 2011 the Environmental Committee heard an introduction to the issue of relaxing City rules that regulate the keeping of chickens, goats and bees after a report on the subject was forwarded to the Committee from the Sustainable City Commission. The Committee requested staff to continue studying the issue for further consideration at a later date. The Office of Sustainability has continued research on this topic along various lines: surveying similar regulations in the other large cities in California to provide context to Long Beach's rules, taking a more detailed look at the process followed by cities that have recently changed or are in the process of changing their rules to be more permissive or clear, speaking to individual residents that have interest in keeping these animals and speaking to staff in other cities that worked on the policy updates or are responsible for enforcement. The Office of Sustainability is prepared to offer the following series of findings accompanied by tables comparing the rules of California's 10 largest cities.

Community interest in the ability to legally keep chickens, goats and bees is related to a renewed desire to be able to produce eggs, milk and honey locally. While these activities have been an integral part of human civilization for thousands of years in close proximity to people's dwellings, rules restricting them have become the norm in urbanized areas. The national local food movement is causing communities to reconsider restrictive rules and find ways to reintroduce or legalize these animals without compromising quality of life concerns.

Title 6 of the Long Beach Municipal Code provides regulations on the keeping of chickens, goats and bees that, due to the lengthy distance requirements from dwelling units (50 or 100 feet), make it difficult in most areas of Long Beach to keep these animals legally. Despite such restrictions, these animals are often kept in residential backyards anyway and are only discovered by the City upon the complaint of a neighbor. The rules were revised most recently in 2001 to become more permissive with regard to the keeping of rabbits.

Enforcement of these rules falls primarily on Animal Care Officers and Code Enforcement. A large number of calls for service are related to complaints of crowing roosters, which are prohibited everywhere in Long Beach. Investigation of the complaint can often lead to the discovery of additional hens on a property. Officers may then be in a position to require their removal due to not meeting the distance-from-neighbor requirements, even though the keeping of the hens themselves was not a source of complaint. More permissive rules along with education could reduce the need for this incidental enforcement.

**Comparison of Chicken Keeping Rules (Distance and Limit)
For 10 Largest Cities in California**

Minimum Distance of Coop From Neighbor's Dwelling	City & Limit on number of birds
100 feet (from multi-family dwellings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long Beach (limit of 20 chickens)
50 feet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anaheim (limit of 3 chickens) • Bakersfield (no limit, large rural lots only) • Long Beach (limit of 20 chickens) • San Diego (limit of 25 chickens) • San Jose (limit of 20 chickens)
40 feet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • San Jose (limit of 10 chickens)
35 feet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresno (no limit) • Los Angeles (no limit)
20 feet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oakland (no limit) • Long Beach (limit of 1 chicken) • Sacramento (limit of 3 chickens) • San Francisco (limit of 4 chickens) • San Jose (limit of 6 chickens)
15 feet (from property line)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • San Diego (limit of 15 chickens)
None (Accessory setbacks apply)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • San Diego (limit of 5 chickens)

Of the ten largest cities in California, only Bakersfield and Anaheim have more restrictive chicken keeping rules than Long Beach. San Diego had very similar rules to Long Beach until updated rules were adopted in January 2012.

Comparison of Goat Keeping Rules For 10 Largest Cities in California

City	Limitations
Anaheim	Allowed on parcels greater than one acre
Bakersfield	One allowed per quarter acre in suburban zones
Fresno	Permitted on lots one acre or greater
Long Beach	Max 1 goat, must be 100 feet from neighbors, not allowed south of Anaheim St.
Los Angeles	Allowed on lots 17,500 feet or more
Oakland	Not mentioned in Code, new rules in development
Sacramento	Only allowed in agricultural zones
San Diego	Must have 2 miniature goats, accessory building setbacks apply for enclosure, personal use only
San Francisco	Up to 2 female goats allowed
San Jose	Must be 200 feet from neighbors

Of the ten largest cities in California, only San Diego and San Francisco have codes that allow for goats in a typical residential setting. San Diego's updated rules specify that only two miniature goats be allowed, the only city to make that distinction. Oakland is currently in the process of developing new rules that include goats.

A local community organization, Long Beach Grows, proposes that Long Beach establish new rules for chickens and goats that are modeled after the City of Seattle. In Seattle, up to three small animals may be kept per dwelling unit or business establishment, including cats, dogs, rabbits and miniature goats. Miniature goats are also required to be licensed annually, the same as dogs and cats. In addition, up to 8 chickens may be kept as long as their coop is at least 10 feet from a neighboring dwelling unit.

A Zoning Code regulation (21.51.210) for Long Beach currently limits household pets to no more than four per site, without specifying exactly what qualifies as a household pet. Additionally, the present rules for keeping chickens in Long Beach outlined in Title 6, allow for one chicken to be kept as a pet. Clarifying the animals included in these codes could be an approach for keeping a small number of animals by right.

Comparison of Bee Keeping Rules For 10 Largest Cities in California

City	Limitations
Anaheim	Prohibited
Bakersfield	Allowed for domestic use in suburban zones
Fresno	Not allowed
Long Beach	Need to be 100 ft from neighbor or street
Los Angeles	Not mentioned in Code
Oakland	Not mentioned in Code, new rules in development
Sacramento	Not mentioned in Code
San Diego	Max 2 hives, 15 ft from neighbor, 20 ft from public way
San Francisco	Not prohibited
San Jose	Max 2 hives, 50 ft from dwelling, 10 ft from property lines

Besides Long Beach, only San Diego and San Jose provide much specificity in their code regarding bee keeping, and each of them have easier requirements to meet. Oakland is currently in the process of developing new rules. A backyard beekeeping club, Long Beach Local Beekeepers, suggests using rules adopted in Salt Lake City, Utah. In Salt Lake City, up to 5 hives are allowed that need to be at least 5 feet from a property line but also have a 6 foot tall enclosure that causes the bees to fly upward, thereby limiting contact with humans.

In conclusion, there is a growing awareness of how food is processed and how far it travels from farm to table. As more people in Long Beach look for a more sustainable way to live, there is a rising demand for access to fresh local foods. Animals, such as chickens, goats, and bees, can be accommodated in residential areas and are increasingly common despite restrictive rules, possibly leading to unproductive enforcement actions.

As one of the largest cities in California, Long Beach is not alone in having what could be considered outdated rules regulating backyard animals. San Diego, along with other major cities nationwide, has shown these rules can be updated to reflect new community priorities for local food production and quality of life. Oakland is currently engaged in its own process. In order to address a key component of becoming a more sustainable city, Long Beach has the option to continue down that path as well.