

Responsible Livestock Ownership Bylaw

Focus group feedback summary

Report prepared: December 14, 2020



Project background

Strathcona County is reviewing the current Animal Control Bylaw (18-2011) and Apiculture Bylaw (43-2011) in preparation for the development of a new Responsible Livestock Ownership Bylaw.

With consideration of public input and legislative requirements, this new bylaw will focus on responsible livestock ownership that minimizes disease risk and supports animal welfare, land stewardship and opportunities for agriculture.

The public was initially invited to provide feedback through an online survey that ran from July 23 to August 16, 2020. The [full survey results](#) and a [summary report](#) are both available on the County's website.

Key findings of the survey included:

- 85.7 per cent of people were drawn to the quietness of a rural property
- 72.6 per cent of respondents indicated that the ability to have livestock is an important aspect of country lifestyle
- Animal noise and the buildup and smell of manure were key concerns
- Honeybees are considered highly suited to small properties
- The type and amount of livestock considered suitable on small properties was not clear in situations of large animals, and poultry and fowl

These findings regarding suitable livestock types and numbers, raised the need for additional discussions about two distinct topics: large animals, and poultry and fowl. Discussions were also needed regarding permit allocations of honeybee hives due to challenges raised through discussions with the Provincial Apiculturist and the survey findings.

Of the 935 rural residents who participated in the survey, 148 of them expressed interest in participating in follow-up focus groups.

Engagement overview

To limit the spread of COVID-19, focus group sessions were held virtually using Zoom. Two focus group sessions were held for each topic for a total of six sessions.

The objective of the focus group discussions was to better understand key areas of concern as identified in the survey, and options for fair implementation of potential changes proposed by a new bylaw, to balance a country lifestyle and opportunities for agriculture on properties smaller than five acres related to three topics:

- 1) Large animals
- 2) Poultry and fowl
- 3) Honeybees

The focus groups were held between October 20 and 22. They were moderated by an external facilitator with a dedicated note taker for each session. All comments were collected verbatim and are available in Appendix A.

Of the 148 that expressed interest in participating, 90 registered for the sessions. In total, 52 residents participated in the virtual focus groups.

Participants per topic:

- Large animal – 25
- Poultry and fowl - 18
- Honeybees – 9

*17 participated in more than one session

Summary of what we heard

Comments were collected during each focus group and are included in Appendix A.

General themes

Themes that were discussed in multiple conversations included:

- Responsible livestock owners need to be **stewards of the land**
- Responsible livestock owners should **not cause a risk** to other livestock
- **Manure management** must be well addressed in the bylaw
- There is a difference of opinion among residents of how **rural living** should look, smell and sound; a sense of **community** and having good **relationships** with neighbours is important
- Awareness is needed on **additional restrictions** on livestock (restrictive covenants)
- **User-friendly** bylaw
- Encouragement of agriculture is not through regulations
- Complaint-based bylaw decreases **neighbour relations**
- Should closeness to **Sherwood Park** affect the number and type of animals allowed?

"I think it goes beyond responsible ownership - it should also address impact on neighbours, the neighbourhood and the property value..."

- Focus Group Participant

Large animals

Key themes and feedback across all types of large animals included:

- All properties are unique and need to be treated as such. Total property size does not equal **usable land area for livestock**. Permits should be based on the

property's capacity (grazable acres). A space consideration should be made for the yard site, not accessible to livestock

- Allowable number of livestock (allowances) should account for **herd animals**, specific types of livestock that do better when there are more than one of them
- Participants recognized the updated bylaw may result in changes to types and quantities of what is allowed on a specific property. Feedback included, a **transition period** where allowances are reduced; the lifespans of animals currently on properties should be considered
- Bylaw must be **enforceable** through measurable **outcomes** based on clear expectations provided in the bylaw or related documents that sets standards for livestock ownership

Horses were specifically discussed under the theme of large animals. Key themes and feedback included:

- Horses are important to a country lifestyle, **do not reduce horse numbers**. Horses are people's pets and considered part of the family

Themes specific to swine:

- Swine vary in size and purpose. They can be **pets or food** which affects suitability
- Swine breed can affect the level of impact on neighbours although disease concerns may be the same
- The larger the property the more suited it is for swine

Themes specific to donkeys

- Purpose of donkey is to **protect other animals** from predators
- The larger the property, the more suited it is for donkeys

Poultry and fowl

Key themes and feedback included:

- Current allowances are high for **personal use**
- Allowances should consider the **purpose of birds** (meat or eggs)
- Could consider other options for determining allowances
- Number of roosters, geese, guinea-fowl and other loud birds could be limited per property in a subdivision setting as noise on smaller properties has a larger impact on neighbours
 - Properties under three acres would not be allowed loud types of birds
 - Properties larger than three acres, less than five acres would be allowed limited number of loud birds
 - Loud birds and loud dogs could be treated similarly
- Proactive approach needed for **disease awareness** and **biosecurity** to reduce risk to other backyard flocks and **commercial producers**
- Responsible management practices will reduce **predator concerns**
- Location of poultry and fowl housing in relation to property line could be considered
- Emus and ostriches should be considered large animal not poultry or fowl
- Participants recognized the updated bylaw may result in changes to types and quantities of what is allowed on a specific property. Feedback included that

consideration be given to the purpose of birds for a transition period, if allowances are reduced

Honeybees

Key themes and feedback included:

- Commercial beekeeping is a **livelihood** and should be protected. Hobby beekeeping is a **privilege**
- Location of subdivision or size of properties in the subdivision could provide for **greater than four hives** without negative effects on neighbours or native pollinators
- Permitting honeybees in subdivisions should incorporate **good management** practices, including accommodating hive splitting to prevent swarms
- Can we achieve a **balance** of honeybees and native pollinators?
- Additional considerations for honeybee permitting:
 - Continue with permit length of five years
 - Permit connected to property
 - First come, first served permits, current permit holders take priority due to investment
 - Location of hives on property included in the application
 - Inventory of available resources for the honeybees
 - Beekeeping education by way of course or mentor

Program considerations

Feedback and themes related to programming offered by the County in general included:

- **Educational resources** will promote accountable practices and encourage responsible livestock owners
- The County should be the **connection to educational resources** to encourage successful livestock ownership that is responsible and reduces negative impacts on surrounding properties
- Manure disposal options need to be available
- Smaller properties result in livestock closer to neighbours and homes. When livestock is closer to **property lines** so is manure and feed raising risk of conflict between neighbours
- Neighbours should be consulted prior to **over limit** permit approvals
- **Education** on livestock allowances and responsible practices needs to start before people purchase an acreage in a subdivision

Next steps

Feedback received through public engagement will be balanced with legislation requirements, animal and public health, and land stewardship challenges to determine allowances for various property sizes and land use districts. A draft bylaw will be developed with these considerations and presented to Council for debate and decision Q2 of 2021.

More Information

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Appendix A: What Was Said

Appendix A: What Was Said

Sections:

1. General
2. Large Animals
3. Poultry and Fowl
4. Honeybees
 - Honeybee permitting/process
5. Other
6. Program Considerations
 - General
 - General Numbers
 - Education
 - Responsible Ownership – Environment and Animal Wellbeing
 - Land / Location / Acres
 - Neighbours
 - Complaint Process
 - Bylaw Transitioning

1. General

Comments that reflect on the bylaw in general, across all animals

- I want to ensure that rural remains rural
- Having lived in Asia and seeing the lack of stewardship for animals and how they are kept and treated and fed, I sympathise with people who want to raise their animals for food.
- Our property value has dropped as it is like we are in a farm yard.
- I want to ensure my residential property remains residential.
- Bylaws aren't really needed for Responsible owners.
- In my mind "rural" implies the ability to have livestock. If someone moves to a rural location they should have the presence of mind to think they may live next door to livestock.
- Please don't apply urban standards to rural living.
- I think residential standards should be applied to smaller residential "estate" acreages near in to Sherwood Park - most of these homes were purchased because people wanted more space than what was available in urban Sherwood Park.
- The rules for those lots should have some caveat attached to them so that as people are looking to purchase them, they understand what the rules are for those properties.
- If I had wanted a more 'farm' experience I would have moved further out and purchased more than 4 acres.
- As a responsible owner, you will have nothing to worry about.
- For hunting, one is unable to hunt west of Range Road 221. So there is a distinguishable difference between urban and rural.
- Why punish someone who is currently not violating the current bylaw?

- Wish there was livestock-friendly subdivisions
- Big appetite to keeping animals. Have more interaction, options, best practices, minimums.
- Most people are very responsible.
- Affecting people's personal lives.
- By-law is needed for the people who are not responsible. Need the enforcement side, re penalizing the responsible owner. Need to have a prescribed process when owners are not meeting the standard.
- Part of country life is animal noise and smell.
- Would like to see bylaw at draft stage
- Ensure the number of birds is meets the intended use (not beyond personal use – eggs).
- We have enjoyed acreage life in Strathcona County for over 27 years. It is amazing to live in the country.
- Why are we looking at changing the status quo, is there an issue or have there been complaints?
- We are a multi-use County
- Understands sustainability and for the ability to make your own food. Especially with COVID, no food from China.

2. Large Animals

Specific to horses, donkeys, and swine

- Large animals too close to our house, smell, mice due to feed on ground, flies, cannot open windows. Large animals should be on 5 or more acres, NOT on 3. 28 feet from our house is too close after 32 years have lost property value.
- For some people 1.5 horses, may be fine but for the owners that do want to worry about their neighbors it will not work!
- I think the 1 horse per 1.5 acres of property is good.
- However, once again, the small lots between 1 - 3 acres shouldn't have any large animals on them, including horses, cows, donkeys (unless having 1 for the purpose of protecting the sheep), pigs.
- We have corral 30-35 feet from our house and not nice if we open a window.
- There is a water drainage run off right in front of their corral and one in back that runs through corral that gets contaminated during rain and run off. It goes through two neighbour's property before it hits the ditch.
- I know of 4 horses on 3 acres, and they do not have enough room to even trot. They are treated as lawn ornaments. The county was made aware years ago, and I was also told that nothing would be done unless I made a formal complaint.
- 3 - 5 acres for swine, ensuring that they are basically in the center of the property, fenced, housed and that proper disposal of waste is mandatory, should not be an issue.
- Big difference in 3 to 5 acre properties.
- 1.5 birds/acre is a bit restrictive
- Does not want to see numbers drop

- Frustrating that Multi-Purpose Ag Facility approved and now we are dropping animal numbers.
- Agree that lowering numbers while introducing Multipurpose Agriculture Facility does not make sense.
- County is investing money in the Multipurpose Agriculture Facility, then wants to tell us to have less livestock. We want to support our animals. Education is very important and showcase our animals at the facility.
- Agrees that does not want to see the numbers drop.
- Horses are good for the family unit, teaches kids responsibilities, keeps them out of trouble
- Reducing numbers would cause a lot of hostility for those having to give up horses.
- People invest a lot into their property to accommodate horses
- Horses are family members, management important
- Those involved are dedicated – time, money, stewards of the land.
- Someone in the subdivision has a donkey – does not bother her
- The numbers seem fair
- Donkeys are good for managing pests – useful.
- Pigs are messy and bratty
- Smell of pigs exceeds the smell of horses
- Some breeds of pigs don't smell (kunekune)
- Donkeys don't brae very often – not like roosters
- Could be more tolerance with horse community with County and looking at ways to be creative with numbers.
- Changes (decreases) would be a tough sell with the horse community.
- 2-1/2 acres is slough should they have 3 horses on 5 acres.
- Someone in subdivision has donkey and it does bray but it doesn't bother her. Being able to hear a donkey is like hearing a train. Would feel bad for neighbor who has 2.7 acres and would have to get rid of donkey.
- These numbers seem fair 1-3 acres. Matches the number for your lifestyle you are looking for.
- A neighbor has a little pig that is like a dog, would be heartbreaking for them to get rid of.
- Production type hogs all have the same diseases. Would a pot belly pig be more acceptable than a production pig? If they are 2 different situations, they should this be separated.
- 2 horses per acre and have pens.
- We do not graze in Alberta, can't graze but are fed all year round.
- Horses are herding animals.
- Compliment on grazeable land.
- Neighbor has a 50* 150 foot pen and is straight up manure. Land is there but not enough room for the animals.
- 3 acres of land just for the horses, otherwise not fair to horse.

- If owner does not have enough grazable land , take animals to other properties during grazing season.
- Where the horses grazes - does the subleased have to have a permit as well?
- Responsible grazing and feed when needed.
- Containment of animals is important.
- Go back to species, pet pig or meat pig. Meat pigs need to have 2 to grow. Good alert system on smaller properties. Multifunctional.
- Completely different. Pot belly pig is cleaner than dogs on the farm. Pigs are like dogs. Proper fencing to keep in property.
- Diseases can affect different pigs. A researcher would have to speak to that.
- In-laws raised pigs, wind changed and blew smell into subdivision, by-law came out and tried to shut down operation.
- There should be no cows or horses on 1-3 acres.
- Horses are herd animals, one horse is lonely. Maximum of 2 horses under 3 acres.
- Consider potential harm to horses in water sources (Potomac horse fever) – in Alberta now
- Consider manure, noise, food vs pet purpose.
- Pigs smell too much to be on anything smaller than 3 acres.

3. Poultry and Fowl

Related to all birds

- These are all still subject to normal noise bylaws. Dogs bark, if they bark too much and are disturbing neighbours can complain. So long as the noise birds are causing are not disturbing people its fine-but if there is a really sensitive neighbour then the producer needs to be sensitive to the preference of the neighbour.
- Noise complaints should trigger investigation; however, some people are complainers. We had neighbours in Calgary, that everyone around them, called them "the Shushers" because they always shushed people and complained about noise, that nobody else felt was a concern.
- I would suspect the purpose of the animals is relevant. If animals are being used for sustainable and natural food choices.
- I agree that these (loud fowl) need to be separated from hens as they pose a different set of issues concerning noise.
- Pheasants require much more space than chickens.
- Almost seems like emus & ostriches should be classified with large livestock.
- Why would a person need 20 per acre? On 3 acres, that would be 60 chickens. 20 seems excessive 10 would be better.
- Less numbers/acre helps to management options. The more success the better. We want people to embrace agriculture and learn where their food is coming from. Chickens are easy.
- Agree 10/acre would be fine, 20/acre seems a lot.
- Why would you buy chickens?

- My aspiration for my own family's consumption and sells to close friends any excess.
- We buy chickens as hatchlings to provide eggs. Lifespan 3 years, as I cull my own flock, I want a new generation to come. Needs that crossover to meet her needs, space, the means, the food to maintain flock. 20 birds on 3.5 acres.
- 100% agree of maximum 1 per property (roosters).
- 20/acre is high, 10 is more manageable but seems like a lot also. Not personal use anymore – will impact others.
- Reducing flock numbers is a little unnerving – currently have no issues with coyotes.
- Has 100 birds on 10 acres, only complaint has received was from her livestock getting out
- Comment on quail – Cortex quail, half the size of chicken – button quail, size of budgies
- Have a neighbour who raised chickens in their Quonset with chickens – complained to County. Neighbor selling eggs.
- Noise, fresh air is the concern.
- Fowl on 10 acres different than on 1 to 5 acres
- Fewer concerns to these types of birds (loud) for her
- Rooster – there is no easy way to make it less noisy
- Like how the County divided different kinds of fowl systematically
- Looking for scientific backing for set numbers
- Acreages not 1 to 3 realistic – subdivisions not cut out/designed this way
- Three is not an accurate number, suggest extending to 3.5 acres
- Three to 5 acres sounds like residential – no roosters on 3 to 5 acres
- Geese 5 per acre is not livable
- Two per acre for ostrich is too much - not allowed in less than an acre of land
- Be mindful of quantity of birds
- Pheasants should be clipped, this helps with the management and containment of birds
- Three to 5 acres crutch of matter, should be 5 to 10 acres - lots more space.
- Less than 5 is too close
- Barking dog's comparison – they get ticketed – not roosters?
- 0 for roosters under five acres
- Could be extremely emotional to cull male chicks. A bit of grace period as it's really hard to get to that point.
- Chickens – 10 per acre – no.
- Bylaw on loud birds being homed close to neighbor's residence. Should be based on distance.
- No more than 1 rooster per property. Variety of birds would like bigger number.
- Noise - adding distance to the bylaw. Relevant of distance to your neighbor's house is more important than the number. How to incorporate the distance as a requirement.
- Hens without roosters will still lay eggs.
- For larger birds, need more of a distance consideration. Sound really travels. Barriers to protect neighbor from noise pollution. Sound insulation in a coop. Would be difficult to place birds in a coop every night.

- Networking to share information between producers (transitioning, waste management, composting, noise and smell).
- Suggestion of sound barrier in coop - going down that road putting rules in place as would be difficult to do. Not possible to put in place in the smaller acreages. Maybe reduce numbers.
- Other bird suggestions: pigeons, doves, domestic birds (canaries, parrots, finches, etc.) Can raise hundreds in very small space.
- Does not own poultry, has 8 acres. Could have 160 chickens, but the smell of that many chickens, would be substantial. Cleaning, waste, carcasses and coops.
- Likes the idea to decrease.
- Noise? 160 volume to 80 volume, how many roosters as that is the noise factor.
- What's commercially viable vs what's personally viable?
- Personally, if bird ratios dropped I wouldn't have chickens. 25 in summer had lots of eggs, in winter only 5 eggs per day.
- Waste is a personal choice, if you dump in your backyard and compost. Though the Alberta Government gave a PID number up to 199.
- Look at smell, waste and location of coop when granting permits.
- Does reducing the numbers actually reduce predators? I would suspect whether 10 chickens or 20 predators would still be attracted.
- How has this number 10 been arrived at? Density or threat to commercial producers?
- Considered approach to decreasing to 10, have no problem with and potential threat to commercial producers.
- Social media is how hobby producers communicate. If owners have to get rid of stock, they should have contacts with that network. Social structures with hobby groups very well organized.
- Often these social networks happen organically – for example based on breed.
- I there is a need to transition, time is important. For example if you have to deplete your stock in half. Need to redistribute to sustainable acreage.
- Thinks 10 is a good number
- Thinks 10 per acre is quite a bit
- Why is it based on per acre?
- 10 birds/acre is better on smaller acreages
- Subdivision atmosphere – tighter restriction
- 10 per acre has more room – farm-like
- Less than one acre - can legally have chickens?
- Chickens to self sustain vs selling eggs? What is the goal? How do you draw guidelines for selling vs personal use?
- 10 vs 20 birds per acre will cut down on manure but not on the sound or predators
- Upsetting if numbers per acre stayed at 20
- 10 per acre in subdivision is too many, less is better being in a subdivision – but in larger parcels it is ridiculous
- Meat chickens also to keep in mind
- Loud fowl - 0 (none) for 3 to 5 acres – they are noisy even on 5 acres

- Larger properties for roosters
- I support 0 (none) for 3 to 5 acres also
- What to do when get roosters by default from breeders? What do you do with them?
- 0 (none) for 3 to 5 acres
- How to deal with unwanted/excess roosters – need options? Who to call? Excess hens also, what to do with them?
- Agree – 0 (none) for 3 to 5 acres, should be per property for bigger fowl
- What is the need for these animals? Be more strict with guidelines with these dangerous birds
- These larger birds should not be in subdivisions
- Element of “buyer beware” (large birds or loud birds)
- Should be complaint driven also (larger birds)
- Should be like a Noise Bylaw
- “Peacocks” missing from the birds.
- Good with 0 (non) for Emu and ostrich, dangerous and problematic in subdivisions
- Numbers for acre should be different for chickens and turkeys
- By decreasing numbers, you may also decrease the number of breeds/types of birds you own.
- Maximum of 20 chickens for personal use
- Turkeys should be in a different category.
- Maximum fowl numbers should depend on size.
- Noise on an acreage is a big problem – especially peafowl
- Large birds (emu, etc) should be zero on acreage/subdivision – dangerous and hard to contain. Should be considered large livestock and have a containment assessment.
- Roosters crowing are very loud and disruptive.
- Disease in chickens affecting commercial and other producers.
- Chickens should be a maximum of 3/ legal property up to 5 acres, No chickens on properties close into Sherwood Park.
- We should look toward experts on the ratio of roosters to chickens. I can appreciate that people like pets and roosters are magnificent, but they are also quite noisy and generally aren't trainable when it comes to being quiet. We do not want to have a whole bunch of restrictions put on where it is mandated that shelters have to be built in order to put the roosters in at night, however, people who may not like animals, also live on acreages.
- Her birds are inside in the winter, but outside in summer – more noise potential when outside
- Less birds in subdivisions
- Program for County to take in unwanted fowl.
- Biosecurity a big deal. Drop off sites would not work.

4. Honeybees

Related to honeybees and hives

- I am wondering if you plan to make the distinction between native and imported bees?

- I wonder if we should even allow honeybees? I wonder because if they are the hunters of our native bees, who are the pollinators, do we really want our native bees to be eradicated? OR if hives can only be set up on farm land of at least a quarter and the bee keepers are brought to that land to service their bees.
- Bees need water and will end up in your pool.
- How do you account for wild hives?
- Six hives in backyard. No shortage of bee pasture. Has native bees in garden, lots of food. 4 hives per subdivision, could be plenty more. Commercial producers keep 20 to 30. No one keeps one hive. Minimum of 2 and split hives in the spring.
- Range of bees will travel up to 5 kilometers for food. Good bee management has at least 2 hives and will split hives to prevent swarms.
- Bees are incredibly important, and it is our responsibility to ensure that they continue to exist. Application - parameters could dictate which 4; beekeepers needs to divide hive to keep healthy, may need to have a second stage to the license maintaining bee health. Enforcement could come back if needed.
- Bees are an investment; continuing care is not the County's responsibility other than the way they affect other people.
- Owners responsibility to look after bees. Is an expensive hobby, spent \$1500 if lost will have to purchase more, order in October for spring delivery. Not really in favor of a time specific permit. First year no honey harvested. If you are spending the money you will want to be responsible and look after them.
- What do you do with existing beekeepers? Feels like you are fixing a problem that doesn't exist. Would have to be densely populated to have a problem. Not sure where the by-law is coming from, the more you regulate the more will not follow.
- Each subdivision has 2 beekeepers per division. Not 4 hives per 1 mile, is much more than 4 hives. Cannot see that happening and does not think 1 mile between beekeepers is feasible.
- If dogs are abused in the County you call the Humane Society. Just because you've invested does not mean you will look after. Rules and regulations will have to be followed.
- The cost of one beehive from a co-op is \$200, if resources offered, they will be willing to take them. Keep a list of other beekeepers.
- Assign a value to successful beekeeper. Adopt humane society questions when you go to adopt an animal. List things that you are doing to a responsible beekeeper.
- Cannot prove whose bees they are as they can fly up to 5 kilometers.
- If they swarmed the owner would have to look after. Need to be careful with neighbors and educate. Relationship building and sharing information.
- Sometimes swarms happen despite your best efforts, bees can go up to 75 feet, not necessarily a bad beekeeper. Do not want to be misleading.
- First year we have had honey bees. Gardens for bees and other crops. Bees can travel up to 5 miles. If not good land stewards, decline in fruits because they didn't have pollinators.
- Base it on science. Agree on one mile between hives.

- Bees are a ton of work. Investing a lot of money and time to take care of hives.
- Farmland is huge, neighbor has 2 quarter sections, can see bees travelling. Disease is a big thing as well as pesticides. Need to look at what is on the farmland and is it sustainable.
- Not sure what city rules are, but have seen a lot of urban beekeepers. There is no by-law in Fort McMurray.
- Purchasing acreages to have honey bees - why can't I have 10 hives on this parcel, when I can have in some cities. Just need to be aware of these expectations.
- Whatever we do the primary concern is the people who drive their income from the industry. Livelihood is dependent on it. 17 hives are a break-even number.
- Important making sure the hobby beekeepers don't compete with the commercial producers. Also, commercial beekeepers should have emphasis over the hobby beekeeper.
- Preservation of the native bees as on the decline. Need more education to ensure doing things properly for the hobby beekeeper.
- On 8 acres, every time they had a hive, they had a swarm. Limit to 6 as per by-law. Ensure enough food for bees.
- Erring on the side of caution. Community gardens everywhere, why not have community beehives on farmland. Access to owner on land. Long term viability, if the honeybees are attacking native bees, do we really want to increase in the subdivision. Native bees would be safe in the subdivision: farms – honeybees; subdivisions - native bees
- Can't compare to community gardens. You can't leave bees as they will die.
- Not feasible to have on farmland as animal predators will attack.
- Permit of 5 years changed to 6 or 7?
- If nobody in your area applies, then you can renew for 5 years.
- Agree something in place when 5 years is up. What do you do with your hives? Otherwise how is it fair? Make sure transitional ability, if your permit is ended.
- Consult with beekeepers to see if they could help. Consultation with beekeepers would you even consider taking them or not. There is a personal connection even though they are small and don't live very long.

Honeybee permitting/process

- I think we need to look also at what is going on in Edmonton. I know a guy...with a 'permit' who has 5 hives on an urban lot with satellite 10 hives on friend's properties in a 4 block radius. I think people in the country will expect if people in the city can have so many hives why can't we have as many in the country?
- Responsibility, consideration of neighbors and education.
- If someone gets a permit for bees, then in that permit the permit holder should be able to prove their property has enough resources for the bees
- Do larger properties with bees impact the permitting of rural subdivisions?
- I think the only other item that might generate an issue is poorly maintained hives that are located front and center of a resident and that diminishes the look of the subdivision and could impact neighbor house value.

- I think that the beekeepers in Strathcona county should take precedence over the individuals who would like to have honey as a hobby. The beekeeper who keeps hives at our residence has invested thousands of dollars into his business and individuals should not supersede his business.
- As much as I would like to have my own honeybees on my own property, I think that it is more important for the beekeeper to have the bees on my property. I am a good steward for them and ensure that we have a variety of plants, flowers and trees to sustain them as well as the indigenous bees.
- I do believe that the area restriction is important. We do not want more diseases in our bees because they are such a vital part of the life of humanity, and we do not want to see them decline again and effect the food sustainability.
- As well, if someone has a permit for bees, and is a hobby bee keeper, I believe that if a bee keeper wants to put bees in the area, that once the permit has expired, that the bee keeper can then take precedence and put his bees in the area.
- In a subdivision could one resident have 4 hives or could 4 residents each have a hive?
- Who monitors the hives that the beekeepers are being responsible owners? Would the County connect producers with the Provincial Apiculturist?
- Neighbor to someone keeping bees, who would you call to report?
- Is there a trail from issuing license to beekeepers?
- How would you determine who receives a permit if more than one person in the mile radius would like one?
- Write the by-law to be as clear as possible.
- Specific time application not a bad idea.
- If receive 5 at a time what criteria to decide who is successful. Other than being 1 mile from your next beekeeper what are the basic minimum that you need. There should be criteria.
- First come first serve at one specific time of year.
- Yes, 5 years is a reasonable amount of time for a permit. Concerned if permit was taken away as this is their retirement project. What criteria to decide if your permit is removed. As long as all criteria were met and you are considered in good standing then would be approved for another 5 years. But if not in good standing and not a responsible owner and neighbors complaining then perhaps permit removed.
- Best to leave up to beekeepers and life cycle of a hive.
- If have applications and approvals, then keep at 5 years.
- After 5 years how would I dispose of bees if not able to renew if at maximum in the area.
- If you've invested, I agree you should be given priority after 5 years. People that have a permit and are doing well, should be given priority.
- Edmonton urban beekeepers required to take a course. Knowledge is power. Knowledge, information, and resources or to have a beekeeper mentor. Mentorship is a great idea.
- Means of regulating, so some form of certificate.
- Some mentors will not have a certificate, but do have years of experience. Is a certificate necessary/mandatory?

- How to consider neighbor complaints? One year applied for a permit and a neighbor was allergic, reapplied the next year with no complaints so we were able to go ahead.
- Neighbors permission, you do not need to over permit. Honeybees may or may not last. When researching and applying for permit you are serious.
- Baseline knowledge no need for a certificate.
- Fear comes from a lack of education. Reassure people as the beekeeper. Only complaint should be a swarm.
- Use a draw system like you do with hunting and fishing. Have permit put a time on it as it is a privilege, you would know that you have a time limit. Be careful as our knowledge is not up to speed right now.
- Most people who move to acreages from the city have no clue how much work it is. 5-year permit after 2 years?
- Like the idea about the draws. Very similar to fish. You are allowed this privilege, it's not a right. Would open a lot of education component.
- The idea of a draw is a great idea. 5 years is good as it's an investment. If you move, then permit is done.
- We have to look at beekeepers as they are the stewards of the land. Mandatory course with certificate. No draw until you have the course. Education is a must.
- Criteria could include land description and where bees will be kept. Have to notify all neighbors within a mile and see who were all in favour. If no, inform beekeeper to see what can happen. Education on bees.
- Course on getting bees, is it a hobby or pet? We need to look at some of these definitions. Is it an agricultural production or is it a hobby like a pet? You've grown a hive and regenerated it.
- Putting out a bunch of money and then do not get a draw. Use different order, permit issued, take course and then you have so much time, if you don't put the effort in. Phased permitting process.
- Hunting draws, if you want to be a beekeeper get that course under your belt. There's my certificate, now you can apply for a permit.
- 2 things on enforcement component: does county have resources? Maybe we have producers that need a place for hives. Fostering hives, create a fostering registry to help commercial producers and other creative ways to meet the needs. Supporting Canadian honey.

5. Other

Comments pertaining to livestock not listed above

- Noticed sheep, lamas and goats not in these sessions? Will these animals have limits?
- Links into Agriculture Tourism
- Animals become family members.
- Important to reflect that we are living in rural and there will be an agricultural aspect to it all. Farm hospitality is what has to happen here.
- The county needs some justification for any decisions made.

- I think this current proposed bylaw strikes a good balance - thank you - we have to bear in mind there are lots of rural counties around and we want to maintain the diversity of Strathcona County and not become just Sherwood Park-large. Not all subdivisions are right outside Sherwood Park.
- Legal issue – questions around a subdivision restrictive covenant. Makes raising chickens on illegal. County needs to be aware of this. There should be a disclaimer that a restrictive covenant exists. County should not contradict this, it should be honored. By-law not applicable in certain subdivisions.
- Sounds like a subdivision issue vs. no subdivision issue
- Subdivisions are different – need tighter restrictions/special consideration

6. Program Considerations

How the bylaw is rolled out and supported

General

- Did someone say permits— it's cumbersome but creates some level of responsibility and County review and would be break even or possibly make a \$.
- Sometimes red tape for the benefit of our county is worth it - we have always enough people to review permits.
- So the county needs to be specific about what is required to have animals - it shouldn't be oh lets buy a pig and kill it in the fall for food.
- Informing residents is very important
- Unusual that she interacts more with Strathcona County for her dogs than her livestock.
- More interaction with the County with horses needed.
- Not many complaints, more about management than numbers.
- Hit them in the pocketbook, fines. Comes down to responsibility.
- Doesn't matter what livestock is put on property, should make an application like you do for a dog. Then permission can be given. No control at the moment.
- Permitting already exists in the by-law, if want to exceed need to apply.
- Animal owners need some type of guidance
- License the service of the land, not the animal.
- Can you just go and get a horse and turn it out it on your property?
- Do you permit the land or the horse (animal)?
- Not one size fits all. And again, species different sizes and purposes.
- Not just about the numbers as may not solve the problem and we will be back again in 5 years.
- Each acreage is different – if following best practices – should be exemptions to certain residents.
- Each acreage is different, and neighbors all agree, can we have more or less? Exemptions to certain properties.
- Every case has its own story (each property and situation is unique)
- We want to build rural community as a whole. Concern that new residents to rural areas who feel they have worked hard to be able to have ownership in Strathcona County and

be on an acreage (potentially moving from urban areas) could have a negative impact on the rural community because they do not accept all rural aspects (like livestock)

- Look at smell, waste and location of coop when granting permits.
- Currently the set allowances owners need a permit if they go above. Trying to reduce regulations so more people will try. Education will be helpful.
- Struggling with blanket approach – need to understand the purpose? What is the intent to have the birds?
- There should be a distinction between allowing certain things in certain areas. People have made huge financial decisions on this basis.

General Numbers

- There should be no over the limit animals on properties under 3 acres, and anything over 3 acres, all of the neighbours in the subdivision whose land is adjacent or across from that individual, should have to obtain written permission that the neighbours are acceptable to an "over the limit" animal, such as sheep or chickens.
- You should construct the bylaws with very specific requirements that must be met with proof before they can get a permit or approval
- There shouldn't be over limits on less than 5 acres!!
- Over limits shouldn't be on less than 5 acres. In order to get our additional dog, and we live on more than 5 acres, we had to go to the neighbours on each side and obtain written permission.
- Do not want to see a blanket approach on the numbers
- Animals are part of the workforce – don't want to see it taken away
- Hard for owners to give up animals for a bylaw
- Continue with over limit permit.
- No 'extra' (over limit) permits for animals where allowed. Should have to register extra animals and pay.
- I wanted to voice our concerns about 3-acre properties in Strathcona County being allowed to have livestock.
- We are concerned with chickens, pigs, cows, and horses as on a 3-acre property the smell, noise, and potential for disease is unacceptable.
- I think it is ridiculous that I can't own more than two dogs, but a neighbour could have 40 chickens - there is something wrong with that logic.
- We do not feel 3-acre properties should allow chickens, pigs, cows, and horses.
- Reducing numbers will not reduce concerns (predators, noise, etc)
- Should register livestock, more easily track disease, predators, risk, etc. Consider an incentive for registration (free information sessions, etc).

Education

- Having bylaws in place and having people being required to take courses and pay for certificates if they are new animal owners, will allow the county to obtain more revenue.
- Let us find ways to learn/teach people about the care and needs of the animals.

- Vet confirmations of manure management?
- Partnering with Vets? Some vets do info nights already
- Training - the real estate people need to learn that they HAVE to ask what the buyer is looking for and explain the differences before they take people around to see what is for sale.
- I think that if once again, the country requires that people who want to own pigs on 3 - 5 acres of land, that they are required to take a course put on by experts in the field.
- Disease control is husbandry - something responsible, knowledgeable animal owners know and take care of annually, or however often it is required of the species.
- Management more important than numbers.
- Educating the public
- Education important
- Educate on these topics
- Resources for educating – how to get rid of manure
- Need more information/learning resources for residents
- Get message out about best practices from the County
- Tap into increase interest
- Need to promote the PIN – County to encourage
- Need information for residents
- Best way to connect with residents? • Email • Public engagement • Library • Website Stacey • Does the County have an Ag day? • Farm events need to come back • Farm Smart Safety Day • Information nights • Partnering with the Agricultural Societies • Social media • County Living • The rural newsletter - Country Talk • Using Multipurpose Agriculture Facility as hub
- Open farm days – would like to see something like this – would hope to be an educator
- Partnering with vets
- Also, what else is on the acreages, how much space on the property. Can be so different on each property. Horses are quite hard on the land.
- Course at University of Guelph on animal husbandry.
- Comes down to knowledge sharing and teaching people. Horses need to be inoculated, education and having responsible owners and animal welfare.
- More education. When permit applied, education, pasture management, manure management, animal husbandry, vet contact info.
- Please educate people more.
- Educate everyone not just owners. This is part of rural living.
- Used to be a welcome package for rural living, tool used 10 years ago - A Guide to Rural Living. Another tool to use.
- What ever happened to Welcome Wagon? What it is to be rural, need to work in-conjunction with wildlife. Neighborly piece - be kind and caring to one another, building relationships.
- Start education at the real estate level so they can guide clients during decision making.
- Pilot a program to help properties that are struggle. Build success stories and champions. Possible grants?

- Should have an education piece/communication piece. Have to go digging for information to many different resources.
- Consider social based behaviour change – influence and create change
- Education important – educated owners and neighbours.
- Education should be given to both the livestock owner on how to be a responsible owner and to rural residents (about rural living)
- Educating people on the care. Assign a number per acre and hope for the best. It all depends on the person managing, needs to go hand in hand with educating, re waste management.
- Was never asked about PIN until this year
- Owners need to be aware of new bylaws, timelines, proper planning, support to communication when changing expectations
- Communication in newspapers, billboards (like advertising for the survey), mailouts – send to the rural folks
- Educate, get information out, owners follow guidelines
- Education needed!
- People should need to do agriculture properly and not be a risk to others. Education is very important. Possible partnering with agriculture programs, newsletters, one-on-one consults, online platform, livestock help line

Responsible Ownership – Environment and Animal Wellbeing

- Good stewardship
- Manure and land management a problem no matter what size
- Manure bylaws would be beneficial
- Agrees with manure management – can tell if animals in good living conditions/health.
- Is the manure the biggest problem?
- Encourage residents to practice permaculture or rotational grazing.
- Permaculture or rotational grazing
- Animal responsibility and care of the land and environment important
- If limit, there should be vaccines/deworming done yearly – owner responsibility
- What do acreage owners do with horse manure?
- Poorly managed manure 2 horses on 7 acres, on a 5-acre big difference between 3- and 5-acre property if manure is poorly managed. Blunt instrument 11/2 acres. Other provinces have different manure management.
- Vet confirmations of manure management. Vets with animals know what animals are in good living conditions.
- Stewards of the land and providing for the land, generally people involved in these projects are responsible.
- Responsible animal owner, if horse is eroding the ground we've brought in soil.
- Promote the PID number and County doesn't have to. Should encourage to help contain and track disease.
- Has to be more inclusive not about smaller properties. Has to be about responsibility.
- Need to manage manure.

- Focus on how animals are being looked after.
- Environmental and sustainability.
- Other municipalities had horse manure removed.
- Are the animals even monitored for disease?
- Who monitors the removal of manure?
- Our last neighbour had 4 horses and never removed the manure in 4 years. We couldn't even sit out in our back yard this summer for the stench. Frustrating indeed.
- Numbers not about making money, but about management
- Should be about personal use and management
- Don't want to see it a blunt number, bylaw should not to be just numbers but about being proactive about disease.
- Need to focus on the bird owners.
- Responsible producers are in limit, do we need to decrease if we tend to over react over a few complaints.
- Should have proper facilities and care.

Land / Location / Acres

- I also think that we have to look at the living space of the individual.
- I remember years ago (decades, actually - in the 80's) my mother saying that people could only have a certain number of horses on a certain amount of land, but that it did not include living space.
- I think that if we blanket the living space on rural properties to a **minimum** of 1 acre, which means roughly 200 - 210 feet x 200 - 210 feet, then indicate how much land is used after that for livestock, it would be more realistic. Whether the county wants to implement 1 acre or 1.5 acres for living, that would be dependent on studies done for the average size of a living space with house, garage, possibly shop or garden sheds, etc.
- Also, there is the concern about housing / weather protection for the animals - where hay is stored - is it stored properly - what room then is left for the horses.
- You need to use "net" acres.
- Also, we have to look at disease. Since there is a concern about disease, there should be an area restriction or buffer around those farmers who farm pigs for sale in this province as compared to people who have them as pets.
- Land compositions important
- Need to look holistically to be fair with everybody – manure, soil erosion, not enough adequate care of horses
- Per acre, should be grazable land not the amount of acres. Everyone is different.
- Need a site plan.
- 3 acres of land just for the horses, otherwise not fair to horse.
- Needs to site specific with operational plans
- The other consideration is that a person may have 4 acres but that doesn't mean there are actually 4 useable acres for livestock - there are homes, driveways, etc. that reduce that acreage size.

- I think another thing to consider is where on the property, the chicken coop or area where the chickens are housed. Just like building a house, the county dictates how far away from the property line the house must be. These are rules and regulations that are already in place. Having this new legislation being drafted, we can look at perhaps having certain regulations stating how far away from the property line the chicken coop or fenced area is for the chickens or other fowl.
- Regulations on how close coops can be to residents
- Where the coop and chickens are allowed to be on the property should be a consideration.
- Depending on the wind, the smell can affect neighbors.
- Should be based on individual land use. Move forward with education on biosecurity to reduce the risk of disease.
- Each producer's situation is different. Will have to separate breeds, allowance for attrition, re eggs component. If prime is meat they can reduce in a season, if an egg laying component would need more time, also social and emotional attachment, basically a pet.
- Measuring per acre is not the best approach
- Tagging per acre is awkward
- What surrounds subdivisions? Farms, larger parcels of land
- Distance between properties and borders written into bylaw
- Distancing, structures, seasonality, education should be in bylaw
- We should look at where our commercial farmers are and talk to them and the scientists about how to ensure that they will not have contamination from sickness from residents of the county raising their birds for personal use or to sell eggs to others. If there is an area restriction to ensure that no diseases could infect their livelihoods, we should adhere to that. If it is 5 miles, then there should be zones that restricts people from owning those animals. I think that disease is something that we really have to consider.

Neighbours

- Also, to take into account that urban rural - people who live on large lots, but still want to be treated like they are in Sherwood Park proper, that they are paying a lot of money so that they have the space, but they don't want "livestock" around. When you go further out, say Range Road 221 and east, for example, more people are expecting that there may be horses and pigs and sheep and chickens on their neighbour's lots.
- I think it goes beyond responsible ownership - it should also address impact on neighbours, the neighbourhood and the property value that could be negatively impacted when you want to sell 4 acres and the person next door has pigs?
- When canvassing the neighbourhood about their horses and permit they have no problems - in agreeance - should be looked at. Beneficial to go around neighbor to neighbor.
- Relationships of owners and neighbors important

- Each case is different with permit, that all neighbors are in agreement with my animals. That should be looked at. Was it a requirement to poll neighbors? Not just as back up for my permit.
- Just need to be aware of relationship of owners and their neighbors.
- Have conversations with neighbors rather than call by-law.
- To be good neighbours, there needs to be respect between them.
- Smell and noise might be a problem for downwind neighbors.
- We have a neighbour in the community with chickens and I feel bad for the people living right next door who get to hear their rooster crowing in the wee hours and through the day. I can hear it when I am outside and do not live close to them.
- Forget residential area – acreage did not move to subdivision to be by chickens, lamas, pigs, etc. What is going to happen to property value? Need a responsible transition.
- Likes the idea of neighbourliness – important, (for example give eggs to neighbors)
- Why are we putting something in place that will cause neighbour to neighbour confrontation?
- Mindful of neighbours when having birds
- Checking with neighbours is good

Complaint Process

- One of the main things that the county must do to enforce bylaws is to protect the individual who complains. People don't want bad relationships with their neighbours, but they also don't want stress from an irresponsible neighbour. When bylaw sees the infraction, they can be the witness and then they can testify in court. People are afraid to go to court and that is why they don't complain.
- We have called County and no one knows what to do. They tell you to call By-law which we have done. By-Law says they can not do anything. Last call we made Animal Control and they came out and handled it as much as they could! Still horses are 30 feet away from our house.
- Also it needs to be very clear about what neighbours can do if they have complaints and the complaints must be acted on by the County and the county MUST follow through.
- Animal welfare concerns currently go to Alberta SPCA. They have a large livestock unit. Animal welfare issue should be directed to the province and is not really a County.
- SPCA could fine or remove animal not looked after.
- Need a complaint process that we are confident in.
- Strong by-law enforcement for those not following the rules.
- How do you police it? Maybe you have a horse license. If neighbor has a complaint by-law can come out. If you submitted a drawing of land for this horse and are now not complying to the original agreement.
- Currently it is not easy to know who I should call regarding lack of containment (repeat offender).
- Use enforcement to fix situations, but you cannot take away horses.
- Opportunity to visit County if there is an issue
- Bylaw perspective – chronic bylaw complaints – is it the same people?

- Alberta SPCA receiving complaints? Not fed properly? Work with other partners – RCMP, SPCA.
- Are complaints anonymous?

Bylaw Transitioning

- Handle it the same way you did the pork belly pig in Sherwood Park. It's the law and you have 6 months to perhaps 9 months to make the adjustments.
- Grandfather them in they have not violated any bylaws.
- I disagree with grandfathering.
- Grandfathering becomes an issue because when the animal dies, someone may replace it and bylaw may not know that it has been replaced.
- No long term grandfathering
- Grandfathering – lifetime of horse.
- Life of a horse – grandfathering
- Asking to give up animals – very hard
- Would be hard if she had to give up animals because of a bylaw change – emotional connection to the animals
- To give up their animals, especially horses, would be very upsetting and hard
- Grandfathering - Should the life span of the horse be a respectful way to handle it?
- Grandfather to the life span of the animal would be fair. Horses are different that cattle or birds. These are people's pets, so making a choice which animal goes (if needed to) would be heart wrenching. Would sell and move if numbers decreased.
- When transitioning to a new by-law, get a permit to grandfather the animal for its life span.
- Grandfather for the life of the animal(s). Neighbor works with troubled horses; how would you define life of a horse.
- To transition to different numbers/acre, there should be time to re-home, would be unfair to only give culling as an option.
- Time and a transition plan. Not County's responsibility to provide resources to do this.
- If a reduction is asked, give people a year grace period to make the reduction.
- Education on transportation, so people do not just give away their extra birds (think about bio-security and disease).
- Animal owners should network and work together to solve these issues.
- To support transition (if needed), I like the idea of time, whether a year, or the expected lifespan of a chicken. Time for a transition would be fair to a producer
- 6 months – less than a year is a reasonable transition time
- If there is not reasonable timeframe given to folks to decrease their number of animals, residents may release into the wild.
- Deal with chronic complaints first
- Full season for a transition timeframe
- Option to sell at auction if have more time
- Grandfather with time period
- 2 years for grandfathering is too long for transition

- However, it's done no option for grandfather or perpetuity, if by-law changes need time to abide and no exceptions.
- Those that have existing chickens keep birds now and those that are new follow new guidelines – grandfather clause
- A grandfathering clause needs to have a guideline attached
- Two to 5 year grandfathering clause – expect to fall under new bylaw