

Responsible Livestock Ownership Bylaw Survey

WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

DATE: May 20, 2022



In April and May of 2022, Strathcona County conducted a survey of rural residents regarding the proposed new Responsible Livestock Ownership Bylaw.

Introduction and Methodology

The proposed bylaw includes strategies to minimize disease risk and support animal well-being. It addresses land stewardship and opportunities for agriculture, while balancing rural living and neighbour relations. The survey is intended to educate residents on the rationale of assigning livestock units, assess clarity of information, gather data on how many properties may require over limit permits and understand preferences for resources and supports to comply with the bylaw. This survey is one of many public engagement activities that have occurred on the topic of livestock, which has informed the proposed bylaw. The survey results will be used to help clarify final aspects of the proposed bylaw, which is tentatively scheduled to go to Council for approval in summer 2022.

The survey was made available via two platforms – SCOOP (the County’s online opinion panel) and Alchemer (the online platform used to obtain responses from residents of Strathcona County who are not members of SCOOP.) The Alchemer version was promoted to rural residents including through Sherwood Park News ads, County website, social media, the County’s public engagement e-newsletter, and rural road signs. Given the non-random methods used to implement and recruit respondents for the survey, readers should be careful when applying the results to the broader population of Strathcona County.

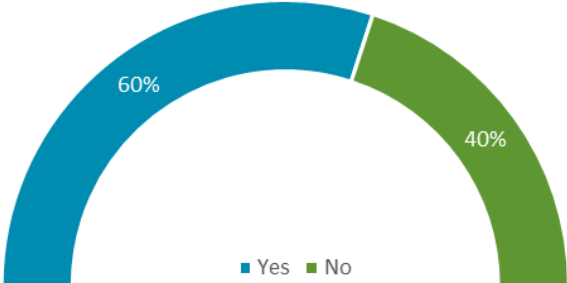
Only respondents who are rural residents who reside in the County were eligible for the survey. 1,763 respondents accessed the survey via Alchemer and 139 accessed the survey via SCOOP, for a total of 1,902 respondents. As questions were not mandatory and some respondents only partially completed the survey, the base of respondents varies question to question. Analysis of open-ended responses was conducted using NVivo software and coded by a single analyst to maintain consistency. The survey ran from April 20 to May 11, 2022.

We are aware that there was interest from urban County residents and some non-County respondents – despite not being eligible for the survey. A core tenet of the County’s public engagement policy is that the public and stakeholders have the right to be informed, consulted and engaged in decisions that affect them. The proposed bylaw discussed in the survey will apply solely to rural County residents. As such, we wanted to ensure that feedback from residents that will be directly impacted by the proposed bylaw was considered fully. To this end, several duplicate and ineligible survey responses were disqualified during analysis.

Engagement / Survey Results

Do you currently have livestock on your property?

We asked all respondents, regardless of category whether or not they have livestock. The majority indicated they had livestock.



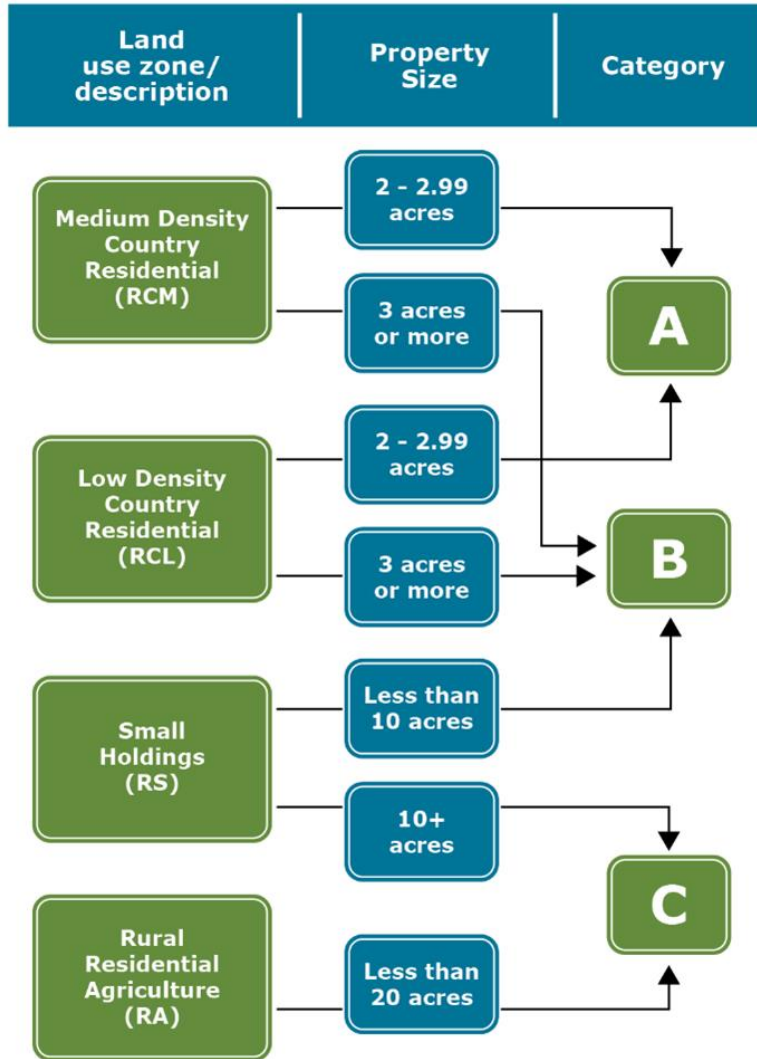
Which of the following resources would you find helpful in supporting responsible livestock ownership?

We also asked all respondents about resources that could be provided to support responsible livestock ownership. Web-based information was by far the most popular resource, selected by 58% of respondents.



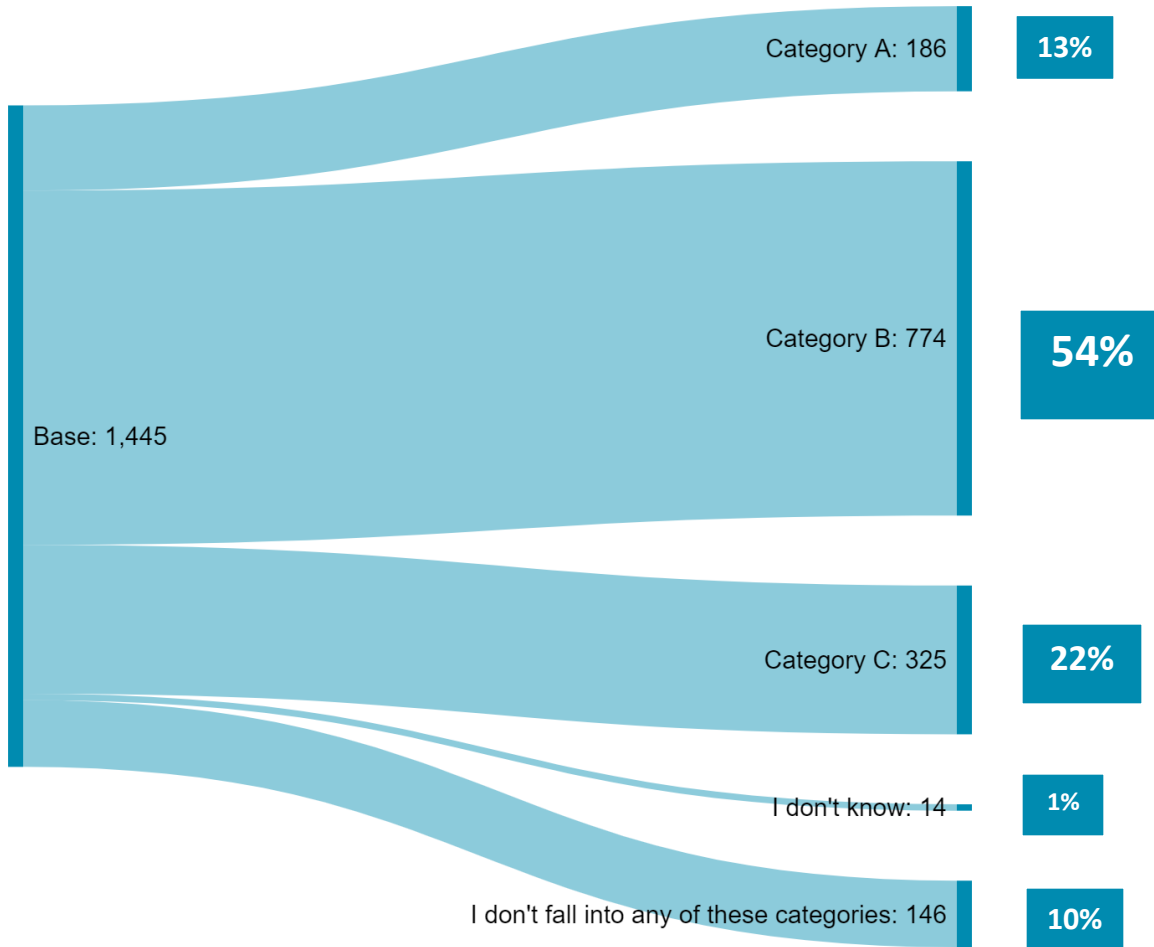
Based on your land use zoning and property size, which category does your property fall into?

In the proposed bylaw, categories based on land use zone and property size determine suitable types and amounts of allowable livestock.



To complete the survey, respondents needed to determine their property’s category based on land use zone and the size of their property in acres. An online assessment tool and contact number were provided to help respondents identify their category.

Based on your land use zoning and property size, which category does your property fall into?



The majority of respondents to the survey fell into Category B at 54%, with Category C coming in second at 22% and Category A at 13%. Respondents that did not fall into any of these categories or were not able to determine their category comprised of 11% of respondents. This question was used to funnel respondents towards more information and five questions specific to their chosen category.

Category A

Category A includes areas with smaller parcels and a larger population in the community. Neighbours will be closer to one another, and livestock noise, smells and waste will more easily affect others.

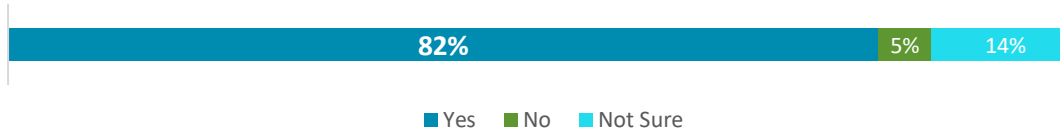
Parcels that are less than three acres are limited in space available for managing livestock and their waste, making it very challenging to meet the needs of larger animals or medium-sized herd animals.

We received 186 responses specific to this category. Respondents were provided with a graphic depicting allowable livestock types and examples of livestock mixes allowable in Category A areas. We then asked questions to gauge the clarity of this information.

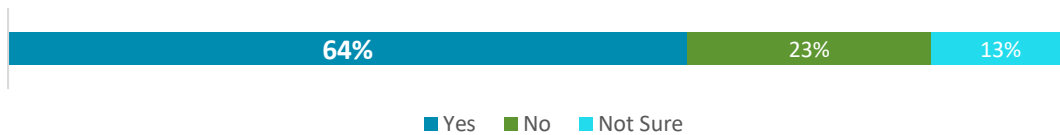
Category A allowable livestock types



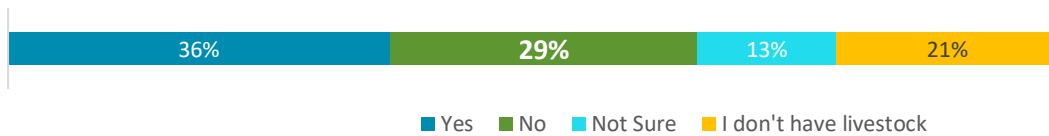
Based on the information provided, would you be able to determine the type and number of livestock allowed on your property?



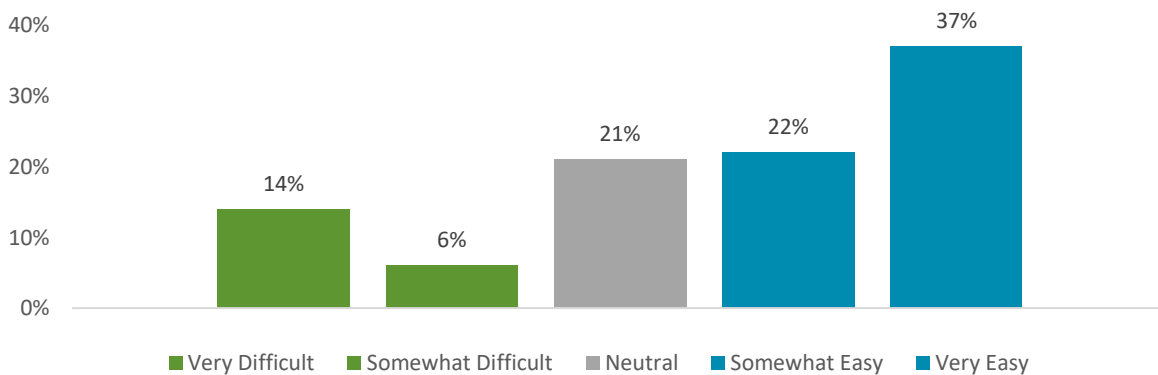
Based on the information provided, do you feel your property is suitable for the type and number of livestock permitted?



Based on the information provided, would the current number of livestock on your property be over the allowable limit?



Please rate your experience in terms of how easy it was to apply the allowable Livestock Units to your property:



Please provide feedback or comments about how we can improve the way this information is presented.

Several respondents used this opportunity to also leave substantive feedback on the proposed bylaw itself. Some respondents fundamentally disagreed with the premise of the bylaw – believing it to be an overstep of the County’s authority. A smaller subset of comments was concerned that livestock units and the allowed amounts were not at the appropriate level for Category A. These respondents were curious whether some flexibility or modifications would be possible to accommodate their land and animal usage. A number of respondents were very concerned that they would not be able to sustainably maintain existing flocks of chickens, turkeys or pheasants. An overall concern by these respondents was that this was overly prohibitive of small-scale agriculture and would impact the livelihoods of residents who currently rely on livestock.

A smaller group of respondents left feedback on how the information was presented. Some respondents were concerned with specific circumstances, such as how properties with 2.5 acres would be assessed. There were also respondents who were looking for clarity on whether the livestock unit allowances would be impacted if animals were housed in barns or other facilities. One respondent noted that they would like to see a full list of animals included, even if they are not allowed in Category A for a full understanding of what is allowed or not allowed. We also heard specific questions about whether certain animals or mixes of animals would be included.

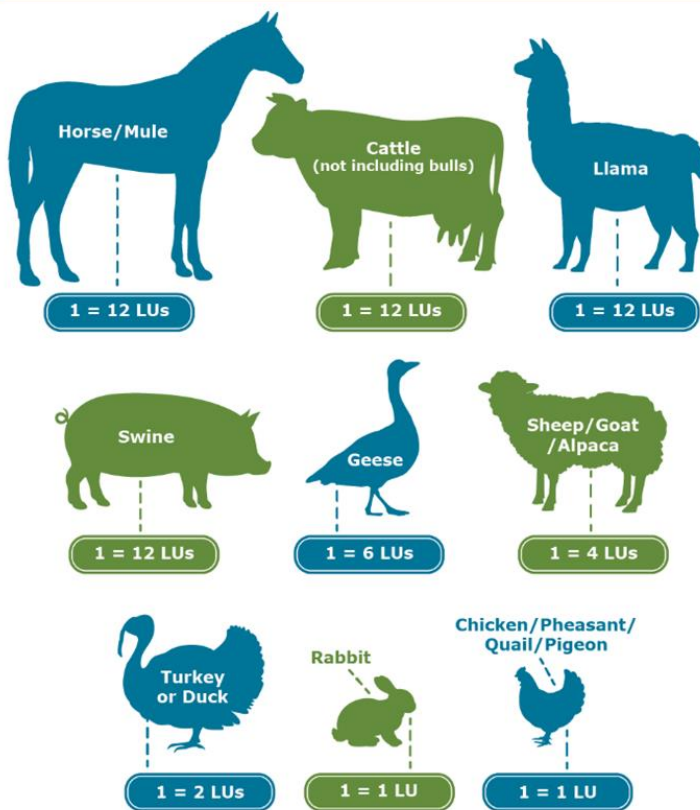
Category B

Category B includes areas with parcel sizes of at least three acres, which provides more space between neighbours, allowing more flexibility for the types of animals permitted.

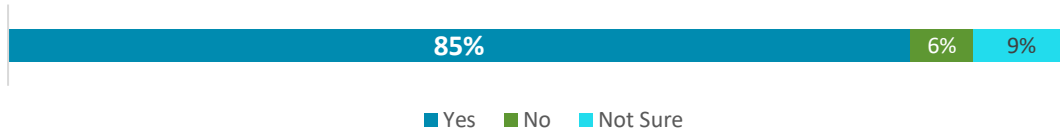
As parcel size increases, there is more space for managing livestock and their waste. This may still be challenging for some parcels due to layout or environmental features, so each resident will need to consider their property's potential when making livestock decisions.

We received 774 responses specific to this category. Respondents were provided with a graphic depicting allowable livestock types and examples of livestock mixes allowable in Category B areas. We then asked questions to gauge the clarity of this information.

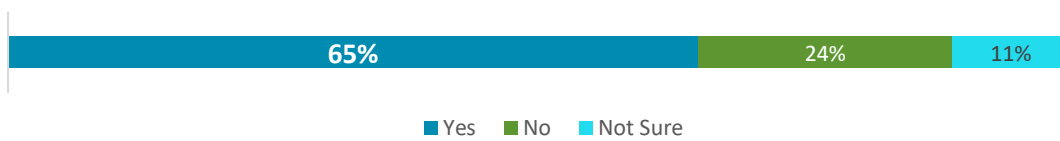
Category B allowable livestock types



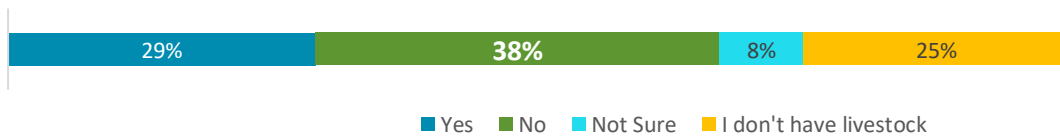
Based on the information provided, would you be able to determine the type and number of livestock allowed on your property?



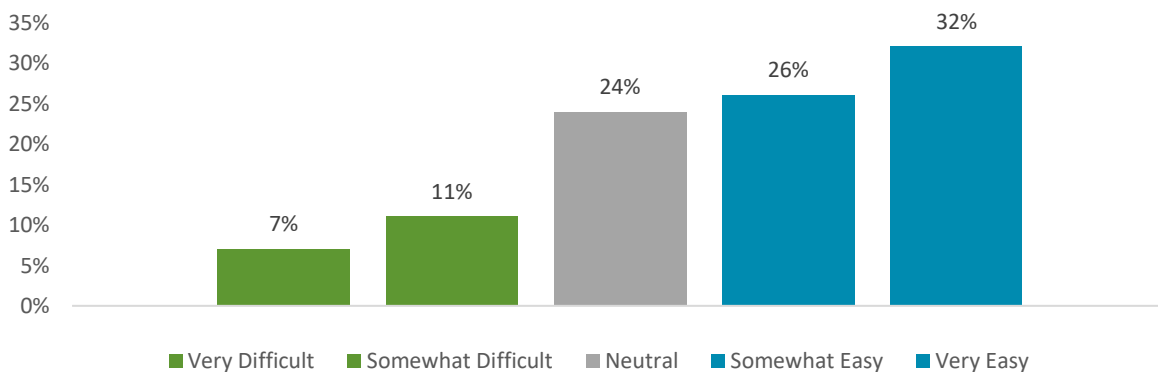
Based on the information provided, do you feel your property is suitable for the type and number of livestock permitted?



Based on the information provided, would the current number of livestock on your property be over the allowable limit?



Please rate your experience in terms of how easy it was to apply the allowable Livestock Units to your property:



Please provide feedback or comments about how we can improve the way this information is presented.

As with Category A, the comments on Category B were a mix of respondents commenting on the clarity of the information presented and commentary on the bylaw itself.

In terms of clarity, we heard a number of comments that the diagrams and visuals were easy to understand. However, some respondents believed more examples were necessary to cover the breadth of properties covered by Category B. Other respondents were looking for explanations of how partial acres would be calculated. We also heard that the list of animals was not exhaustive and should include animals such as miniature horses. Some respondents also wished there was a more straightforward animals per acre calculation, rather than livestock units. We also heard recommendations that the County develop a tool which would allow residents to input their information and receive a calculation of their allowable livestock units.

In terms of commentary on the bylaw itself, we heard a number of concerns. Many were shared comments with Category A – that the livestock unit allowances were government overreach, that the allowances were overly restrictive, and that the allowances would impact the livelihoods of residents who currently rely on livestock. We also heard a number of concerns about how this bylaw could potentially hurt food security for rural residents and the County. Some respondents also noted that the livestock units for Category B would not permit multiples of certain animals, which is problematic as animals such as donkeys and horses can struggle when solitary. Lastly, we heard from a number of commenters in Category B that were concerned that they would be punished harshly under the new bylaw and that they had a long maintained more livestock than what the bylaw will allow on their land.

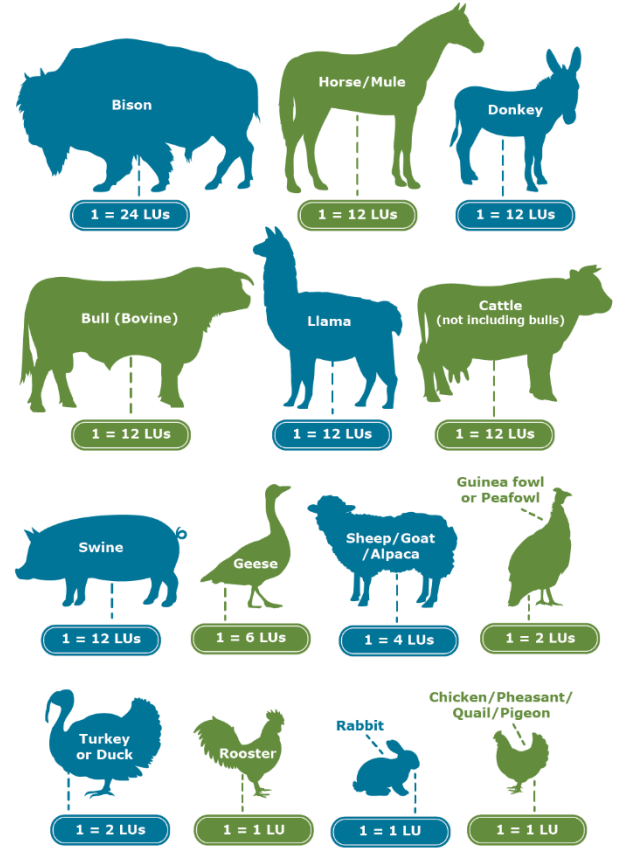
Category C

Properties that are included in category C are better suited for agricultural activities and the land use zoning encourages a rural residential and agricultural lifestyle.

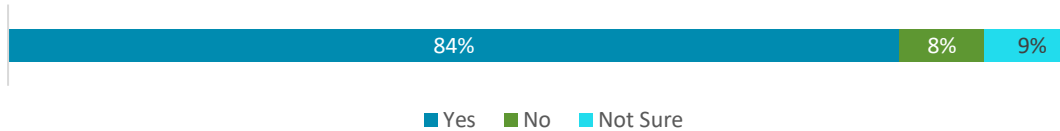
The larger parcel size increases livestock suitability and space for managing livestock and their waste. This may still be challenging for some parcels due to layout or environmental features, so each resident will need to consider their property’s potential when making livestock decisions.

We received 325 responses specific to this category. Respondents were provided with a graphic depicting allowable livestock types and examples of livestock mixes allowable in Category C areas. We then asked questions to gauge the clarity of this information.

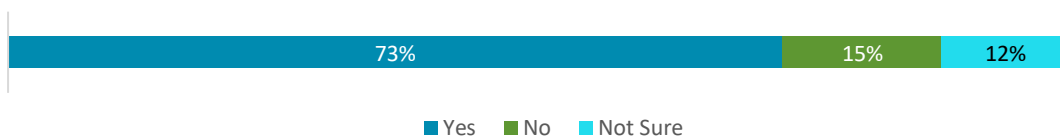
Category C allowable livestock types



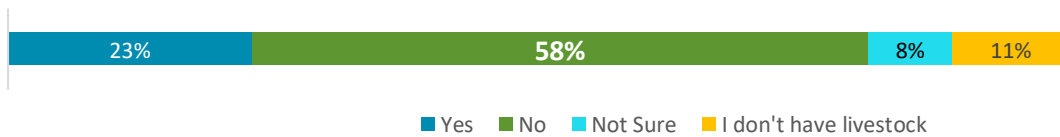
Based on the information provided, would you be able to determine the type and number of livestock allowed on your property?



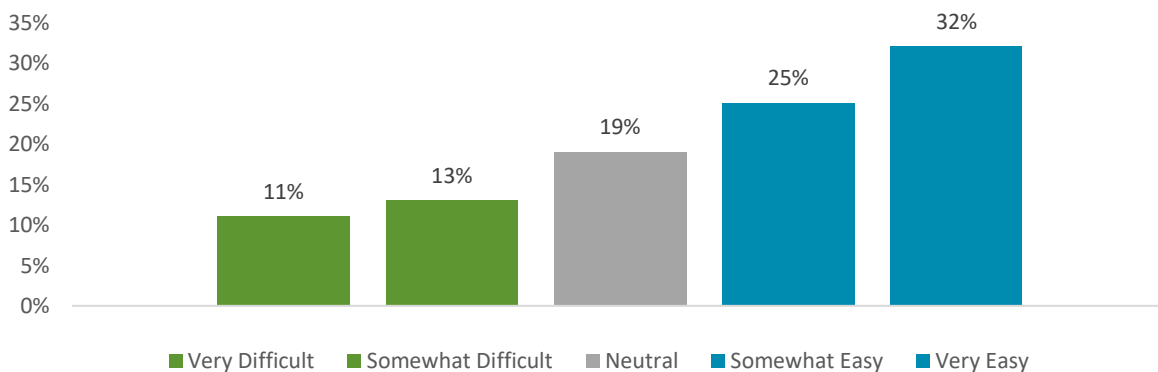
Based on the information provided, do you feel your property is suitable for the type and number of livestock permitted?



Based on the information provided, would the current number of livestock on your property be over the allowable limit?



Please rate your experience in terms of how easy it was to apply the allowable Livestock Units to your property:



Please provide feedback or comments about how we can improve the way this information is presented.

As with the previous two Categories, feedback was split into two: commentary on the bylaw itself and comments on the clarity of information.

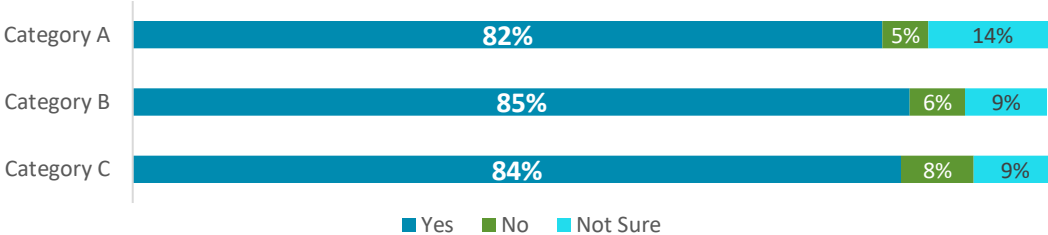
Again, some respondents were left wishing for some type of tool or calculator that would give them the exact amount of livestock units allowed for their property. We also heard a preference for more plain language or a simple number of animals per acre instead of livestock units. Some respondents with more than 20 acres or who were zoned for agriculture outside of the three land use areas identified in the Category mentioned they filled out the Category C section of the survey as it was closest to their circumstance.

We also heard a number of commenters that fundamentally disagreed with the premise of limiting the number and type of livestock in rural areas. These respondents were concerned that this was government overreach and determined by urban dwellers at the expense of rural residents.

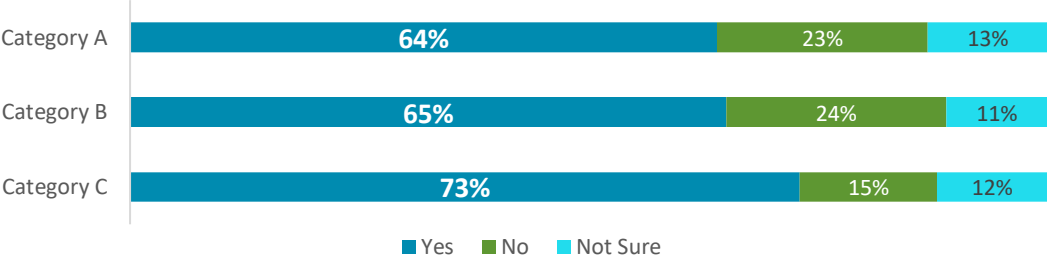
Some respondents were of a different mind and believed that the allowable livestock units were too high. Other raised concerns that the number of animals on their land fluctuated during the year and were concerned about how that would be handled by the bylaw. As Category C allowed larger animals, there were also questions about how livestock units were arrived at by the County. We also heard concerns that some sub-species of animals might not be equivalent in terms of livestock units.

Cross Category Comparisons

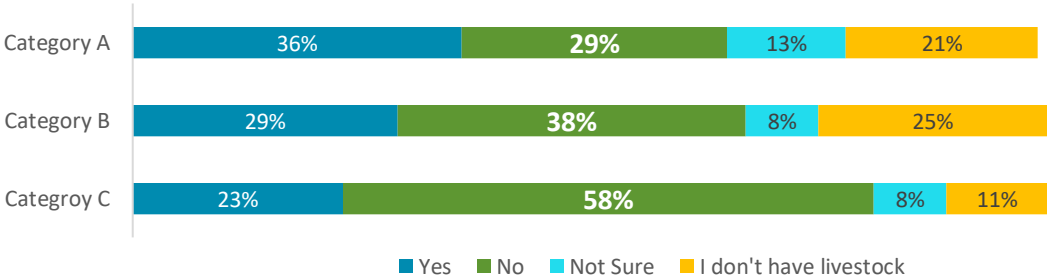
Based on the information provided, would you be able to determine the type and number of livestock allowed on your property?



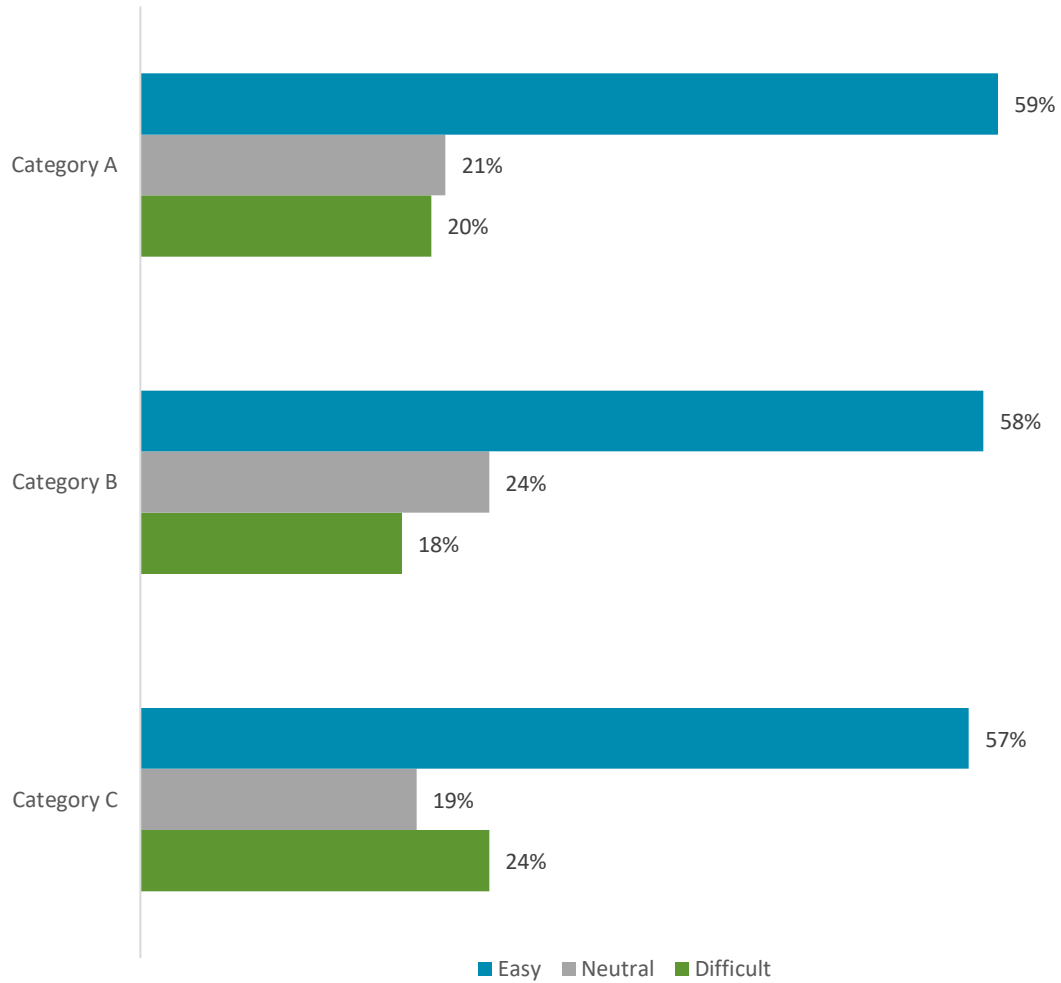
Based on the information provided, do you feel your property is suitable for the type and number of livestock permitted?



Based on the information provided, would the current number of livestock on your property be over the allowable limit?



Please rate your experience in terms of how easy it was to apply the allowable Livestock Units to your property:



What's Next?

Strathcona County is moving forward with modernizations and enhancements to the bylaw. The focus will be on responsible livestock ownership that will minimize disease risk, protect animal welfare and support environmental and land stewardship.

The proposed bylaw will not include any change from the livestock allowances outlined in the current Animal Control Bylaw.

Administration will work with Legislative and Legal Services to finalize the proposed bylaw, with the expectation to return to Council for approval in Q4 2022. If approved, the bylaw will be effective immediately.