Can I keep chickens at my house in Big Lake?

Residents of Big Lake who live in City limits are permitted to keep chickens if they live on a residentially zoned property in either a single-family home, a duplex, or a twin home. Chickens are not permitted on properties with three (3) or more dwelling units. Big Lake Township residents seeking to keep chickens should contact Sherburne County as Big Lake Township has its own separate animal ordinance which the City has no control over.

City residents who want to keep chickens at their homes must have a coop to house the chickens and a chicken run where the chickens may roam unsupervised.

Do I need a permit?

Yes, a permit is required before a chicken coop can be installed on your property. Chicken coops of ANY size are considered detached accessory buildings. This includes all small pre-built coops. City Code requires a zoning permit for any detached accessory building which is 200 square feet or less. Buildings which are larger than 200 square feet require a building permit.

A permit is not required for the ongoing keeping of chickens, only for installing the coop. All chicken keeping must follow the rules laid out in the City's animal ordinance, *Section 390.04 Chickens*. These rules will be enforced in response to complaints.

Where can I get more information regarding keeping chickens at my home?

The University of Minnesota Extension website provides detailed information regarding the keeping of chickens: extension.umn.edu/small-scale-poultry/raising-chickens-eggs

The Minnesota Board of Animal Health provides rules on properly disposing of a deceased chicken carcass: bah.state.mn.us/carcass-disposal/

How do I submit a complaint regarding a neighbor's chickens?

You can submit a complaint using the Request Tracker on the City's website at biglakemn.org/RequestTracker.aspx or by calling City Hall at 763-263-2107.

Contact Us

To obtain a permit, contact Kati Peterson at 763-251-2971; kpeterson@biglakemn.org or visit the City's website at biglakemn.org.

Raising Backyard Chickens

CITY PERMIT REQUIRED

CITY OF Big Lake

...committed to ensuring its citizens with a safe, healthy and pleasant community to live and work.

What are the rules for the chickens themselves?

1. Up to six (6) chickens may be kept on one (1) property.
2. Roosters and crowing hens are prohibited.
3. Chickens can only free range if the yard is completely fenced in. Chickens are not allowed to roam at large, meaning they are not permitted to leave the owner's property.
4. Slaughtering and processing of chickens is NOT allowed in city limits.
5. Chickens may not be kept inside the house except for chickens under 6 weeks of age which are inside the house for brooding purposes.
6. Food material must be stored in a closed metal container.
7. Manure must be removed from the property at least once per week. When it is on the property, it must be properly stored.
8. The enclosure and surrounding area must be maintained in a clean and sanitary condition and kept in good repair. Flies, rodents, and noxious odors shall be controlled.
9. Deceased chickens must be disposed of according to Minnesota Board of Animal Health rules. This would include on-site burial or off-site disposal.

What are the rules for my coop and run?

1. The coop must follow the Zoning code's rules for exterior materials. This means that sheet metal and corrugated metal are not permitted for siding or roofing. Accessory buildings which are larger than 200 square feet must architecturally match the house.
2. The coop must be fully enclosed to prevent escape by chickens or attacks by predators.
3. The run must either have protective overhead netting or roofing with an approved material.
4. Coops and runs cannot be greater than six (6) feet in height.
5. Coops and runs can only be located in rear yards.
6. Coops and runs must be at least 10 feet from all property lines AND must be at least 30 feet from any inhabited structure on a neighbor's property.
7. Coops and runs must be at least six (6) feet away from the house of the person who owns the chickens.
8. Coops and runs must meet the setback and buffer requirements for a structure if they are near a lake or a wetland. This usually means at least a 30-foot setback from wetlands and at least a 50-foot setback from lakes.
9. Small coops, those which are 30 square feet or less, are exempted from SOME parts of the Zoning code but still require zoning permits:

   a. Chicken coops and covered runs which total 30 square feet or less do not count as an impervious surface when calculating the property's total impervious surface coverage. *Note: Properties located within 1,000 feet of a lake or 300 feet of a river are limited to 25% coverage by impervious surfaces (buildings, driveways, patios, etc.). Most other residential properties are limited to 35% coverage by impervious surfaces.*

   b. A chicken coop which is 30 square feet or less does not count towards the limit on the total number of accessory buildings a property can have or the limit on total square footage of detached accessory buildings.

Is there anything else I should be aware of?

The City encourages residents to talk to their neighbors before getting chickens to ensure everyone understands the ordinance. This allows for minor issues to be resolved in a friendly manner without requiring a formal intervention by the City. This handout is not all-encompassing and residents are encouraged to also review *Section 390.04 Chickens* of the City Code.

Please remember that you are responsible for following all building, zoning, and electrical requirements.

Some neighborhoods may have private covenants restricting animal keeping. The City does not track or enforce private covenants.