



## **DRAFT Urban Farm Fowl FAQ**

### **Q: What legislation permits fowl on urban farms?**

A: Please refer to [Subtitle 27: Zoning Ordinance, Sec. 27-2500 Definitions](#) to understand where and what urban farm fowl are permitted.

*“Urban agriculture” is the cultivation of fruits, vegetables, flowers, and ornamental plants, as well as the limited keeping and raising of fowl or bees and similar activities in the urban environment or near residential, commercial, or industrial lands. Urban agriculture includes processing on the site of the farm where the agricultural product is grown or raised in the course of preparing the product for on-site sale, which may cause a change in the natural form or state of the product. This use also includes composting, agricultural education, and incidental sales. Urban agriculture production can occur indoors or outdoors, which may include, but is not limited to the following production methods: in-ground farming, raised-bed farming, hydroponics, controlled environment agriculture, rooftop farming, aquaponics, or edible landscaping. Common accessory structures may include, but are not limited to tool sheds, high tunnels, fencing, composting structures, and water cisterns. The term “urban agriculture” shall not include the keeping of roosters, commercial feeding of garbage or offal to animals, the slaughtering of livestock for marketing, or the disposal of sludge except for the fertilization of crops, horticultural products, or floricultural products in connection with an active agricultural operation or home gardening.*

### **Q: Do I need to register my flock?**

A: Yes, according to [Agric. Art., Section § 3-804](#), any premises where poultry are maintained must be registered with the Maryland Department of Agriculture. This is important in case of an avian flu or other disease outbreak. Please visit MDA’s [Poultry Information page](#) and [Poultry Registration page](#) for details.

### **Q: Do I need a Use and Occupancy permit to house fowl on my urban farm?**

A: Because fowl are allowed by right on urban farms, a Certificate of Occupancy or Use and Occupancy Permit is not required.

### **Q: Are roosters allowed?**

A: Roosters are not permitted on urban farms.



**Q: Is on-farm slaughter allowed?**

*A: On-farm slaughter is not permitted on urban farms.*

**Q: Are there regulations on the sale of eggs in Maryland?**

*A: Please refer to the following guidance and regulations from the Maryland Department of Agriculture on the inspection and sale of eggs:*

- [Egg Inspection Resources](#)
- [Synopsis of Maryland Egg Laws](#)
- [Guidelines for Small Producers Selling Eggs](#)
- [Egg Safety for Small Producers](#)

**Q: Do I need building permits for a housing structure for my farm fowl or a fence permit for my farm fowl run/yard?**

*A: Fences up to eight feet in height are allowed for urban farms. If your urban farm is located in the RSF-95, RSF-65, and NAC zones, you need to obtain necessary permits for accessory structures.*

**Q: Are there any best management practices for chicken housing structures such as coops and lofts?**

*A: There are many creative ways to house urban farm fowl. Whatever you decide, you want to make sure that the structure is easy to clean, move, and provides adequate protection from predators.*

*Fortunately, there are some great Extension resources on housing structures and considerations:*

- [Coop Construction & Housing Requirements](#) (UMD Extension)
- [Small Scale Poultry Housing](#) (Penn State Extension)
- [Small Scale Poultry Housing](#) (Virginia Cooperative Extension)
- [Poultry Housing](#) (NC State Extension)

***Please note that no animals, regardless of species, are allowed to run at large and must be maintained on the owner's property.***

**Q: Are there setback requirements for urban farm fowl or associated structures?**

*A: Refer to the setbacks for the zone your urban farm is located within. Accessory structures (including coops, runs, pens, hutches, and the like) used for housing or sale of animals or fowl shall be set back a minimum of 25 feet from side or rear lot lines and a minimum of 50 feet from any dwelling on an adjoining lot. Please note that urban farms are exempt from regulations in the Landscape Manual. In*



the RSF-95, RSF-65, and NAC zones, crop plantings must be setback a minimum of ten feet from the front street line.

**Q: Are there regulations on using poultry manure?**

A: Maryland law requires all farmers grossing \$2,500 a year of more or livestock producers with 8,000 pounds or more of live animal weight to follow nutrient management plans when fertilizing crops and managing animal manure. Nutrient management plans specify how much fertilizer, manure or other nutrient sources may be safely applied to crops to achieve yields and prevent excess nutrients from impacting waterways. Because of their complexity, these plans must be prepared by a certified University of Maryland specialist, certified private consultant, or farmer who is trained and certified by the department to prepare his or her own plan. Please visit Maryland's [Agricultural Nutrient Management Program](#) and [Composting Poultry Litter in Your Backyard](#) resources for additional information.

**Q: How do we know that urban farm fowl are kept humanely?**

A: Animal cruelty ordinances apply on urban farms. Please refer to Prince George's County's Subtitle 3, [Sec. 3-180. - Animal Cruelty and Neglect; prohibited.](#)

**Q: Are there poultry vets in and near Prince George's County?**

A: While it is often not cost effective to provide veterinary care for backyard flocks, here are a few local veterinary hospitals providing avian services:

[Forestville Veterinary & Bird Hospital](#) (Forestville)

[Gambrills Veterinary Center](#) (Gambrills)

[Maryland Avian & Exotics Veterinary Care](#) (Rockville)

**Q: What do I do with a sick bird?**

A: MDA (Maryland Department of Agriculture) currently offers free testing of sick birds due to the rise in cases of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI). Sick birds should be isolated from the rest of the flock. They should be provided with fresh, clean water and feed. Depending on the illness, a veterinarian may prescribe an antibiotic, many of which are mixed into the water. A good list of common poultry illnesses, symptoms and treatments can be found at

<https://www.freedomrangerhatchery.com/blog/take-these-5-crucial-steps-to-help-treat-your-sick-chickens/>



**Q: How do I dispose of dead birds?**

A: According to UMD Extension's Factsheet, [Managing Mortalities for Small Flocks during an Avian Influenza Outbreak](#), "Small numbers of birds (9 or less) can be buried in most counties on the western side of the Bay. Any on-farm carcass burial must be approved by the State environmental regulatory agency and may not be permitted if the water table is close to the ground surface. Carcasses should be buried three feet deep to deter scavengers but must still be 2-3 feet above the water table. The most common method of disposal for flocks under 100 birds is for the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) to double bag diseased carcasses in bio-bags and take them to the state lab to incinerate."

**Q: Are there best practices for managing wildlife around urban farm fowl?**

A: University of Maryland has a great resource, [Identifying and Preventing Poultry Predators in the Mid-Atlantic Region](#), to help you manage predators that may harm and eat your chickens and other urban farm fowl. The best way to deter predators is to have good fencing and predator proof coops. If your birds have a fixed outdoor area (run), the fencing needs to go into the ground at least a foot deep and then make a 90 degree turn outward for at least another 8-10 inches to prevent predators from digging under the fence. If you have moveable housing, electric netting made for poultry may work well for containing the flock and offer some protection against ground predators, provided an adequate charge is maintained throughout the entire fence line. Electric netting and fencing may fail during winter if the weather is too cold or if there is a lot of snow that weighs down the fence. You may use guardian dogs if you have a large enough area.

If you see signs of predator activity:

1. Identify
2. Understand
3. Know the Alternatives
4. Know the Law

**Resources:**

- [MD Department of Agriculture Poultry Information](#)
- [UMD Extension's Backyard Poultry](#)
- [UMD Extensions' Poultry Publications](#)
- [UMD Extension's Small Flock Management Webinar](#)



[UMD Extension's Raising Your Home Chicken Flock Fact Sheet](#)

[Backyard Chickens: A Practical Handbook to Raising Chickens](#) by Claire Woods

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