

DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CHICKEN PROTOCOLS

DECEMBER 2019



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Denver Public Schools' Requirements and Guidelines for Keeping Chickens on School Grounds

I. Introduction

Schools have a growing interest in teaching students where their food comes from. To better educate students on the origins of what they eat and the science behind it, schools are opting to grow fruits and vegetables and raise chickens and other food production animals. The following policy will outline the necessary procedures and protocols for installing a coop and raising chickens at Denver Public Schools.

II. Getting Started

1. If you're interested in having chickens on school grounds, please contact the Denver Public Schools (DPS) Department of Sustainability at 720-423-4171. Although DPS is willing to accommodate your efforts, the construction and maintenance of chicken coops and runs, and the care of chickens are the sole responsibility of the school. Failure to follow the guidelines below may result in the removal of chickens and chicken coop. DPS Sustainability staff will meet with you to help determine a suitable location for chickens and review your plans as you develop them.
2. Familiarize yourself with the City and County of Denver's ordinances that apply to having a flock of chickens inside the city. Schools that wish to have a chicken coop on school grounds must follow all City and County of Denver ordinances Chapter 8, Article III, which can be found here: https://library.municode.com/co/denver/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TITIIREMUCO_CH8AN_ARTIILIFO

A City and County of Denver Food Producing Animals Permit is required and must be renewed annually and a copy of the permit sent to the Department of Sustainability:

https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/682/documents/Animal%20Protection/FoodProducingAnimals_PermitsApplication.pdf

3. Familiarize yourself with the care of chickens and how to protect the health and safety of students, staff and volunteers who will be involved with caring for the chickens. See Section III: Care and Safety and Section IV: Chicken Health.
4. Familiarize yourself with all DPS requirements for chicken coop design. See Section V: Structures and materials.
5. Familiarize yourself with how to engage students (Section VI) and how to maintain good community relations (Section VII)
6. Complete a Chicken Management Plan and Agreement including coop/run siting and design schematics and submit to DPS Sustainability for approval in conjunction with the Grounds Department and the Planning, Construction and Design Department. Once approval is obtained, you may start your chicken keeping endeavor.

III. Care and Safety

1. Wash hands before and after handling chickens. A hand-washing station outside the chicken area is recommended.
2. Do not eat or drink while in the run/coop or after working in the run/coop until hands have been washed
3. Establish procedures that reduce the transfer of foreign substances into and out of the chicken area. Using shoe booties when entering and leaving is an example of an acceptable procedure.

4. House chickens in an enclosed area down-slope from any food producing garden.
5. No student under the age of five should enter the chicken coop. No student under the age of eight should handle chickens.
6. Ensure the chicken area (coop and run) is the appropriate size with adequate ventilation and proper materials to accommodate the maximum number of chickens planned (see structure and materials section for details).
7. Provide plenty of shavings for bedding (avoid cedar) and straw for the nesting boxes (make sure that the straw is not contaminated by the herbicide clopyralid).
8. The chicken coop and run should be cleaned by properly trained individuals at the frequency determined by the cleaning schedule set in the management plan. Dust masks should be worn when cleaning the coop and run. It is the responsibility of the school to provide dust masks for cleaning purposes.
9. Waste bedding and chicken manure should be placed in garbage bags and thrown in the trash dumpsters. Do not allow waste bedding to accumulate on school grounds.
10. All students and volunteers must have a signed Waiver and Release of Liability (Appendix 1) on file with the school attesting that they have been instructed of the proper care of chickens and the risks that may be associated with caring for chickens and consuming their eggs.
11. The following recommendations should be followed when handling eggs:
 - Keep the nesting box clean.
 - Eggs should be collected daily by properly trained staff, students or volunteers.
 - It's not necessary or recommended to wash eggs and may actually increase the risk of contamination because the wash water can be "sucked" into the egg.
 - The most efficient method of cleaning eggs is to use a soft brush to remove any small amount of dirt off the outside surface of the shell.
 - Do not use eggs that are excessively dirty. If cleaning the eggs with a soft brush does not work, you should wash the eggs with running water (do not immerse). Water should be between 90 and 120 degrees (warmer than the temperature of the egg). Let the egg dry completely and then use a soft brush.
 - Dry the eggs completely before packing them.
 - Temperature consistency is critical to safety. If eggs are washed they should be refrigerated immediately. Unwashed eggs do not need to be refrigerated but should be stored in a dry area with minimal change in temperature
 - Refrigerated eggs should not be left out for more than two hours.
 - Eggs should be stored in a clean carton on a shelf in the refrigerator.
 - You may re-use egg cartons as long as they are clean and labeled appropriately.
 - Properly dispose of eggs that are not to be consumed.

IV. Chicken Health

1. Chickens should be fed a high-quality feed that is clean, dry and kept free of mold.
2. Ensure clean water is always available. A two or five gallon standing or hanging nipple watering system is recommended which greatly reduces the chances of water contamination.
3. Ensure feed is regularly available and kept clean with a chicken feeder.
4. Use the same watering and feeding system that the chicken was raised with. They may have difficulty changing over to a different feeding and watering system.

5. Chickens should have a variety of foods and adequate calcium. Greens such as kale, and fruit such as bananas, are examples of healthy treats. These treats can be given daily.
6. Chickens benefit from protein sources such as beetle grubs and other insects. Dried mealworms are a favorite treat and useful for training. These treats can be given daily.
7. Earthworms, snails and slugs should not be fed to chickens to avoid the risk of gapeworm transmission.
8. Select a breed that is hearty, friendly, and are great egg-layers. It is recommended that bantam breeds not be housed with full-sized breeds as the larger birds may hurt the smaller birds.
9. Establish a schedule to ensure that chickens are monitored as frequently as possible.
10. Post signs on each side of the coop with contact information for the chicken program manager and an alternate so that community members can call to report issues.
11. Chickens can live for up to 10 years and it's not legal to harvest/slaughter chickens in Denver. Be considerate of the chicken's quality of life. Reference the City and County of Denver's Best Practices Guide in the resources section.
12. Identify a local veterinarian that can provide care to sick birds.

V. Structures and Materials

General:

1. Chickens should be kept on the school grounds within the existing fencing that surrounds the outdoor space. Be sure to close and secure all gates during off hours.
2. When deciding on a site for the run and coop, maintain at least 15 feet from a fence shared with a neighbor or from a public sidewalk.
3. Be proactive in protecting your flock from predators. There are dogs, foxes, coyotes, raccoons and skunks throughout the Denver area and all are potential threats to your birds and/or eggs.
4. Be proactive in regards to potential vandals. Chickens may attract unwanted attention to your garden.

Chicken Coop Specifications:

1. The coop should provide at least 4 square feet of space for each bird.
2. Allow for enough space so that an adult can easily access and clean the coop interior.
3. The flooring of the coop can be concrete, dirt or wood. If the flooring is dirt a half-inch hardware cloth should cover the entire floor to prevent rodents from entering from below.
4. Be sure the coop is tightly constructed to protect the birds from the weather. Insulation may be considered for keeping birds warm in the winter
5. Include screened windows with latch and lock to allow ventilation during hot weather.
6. Doors must be at least 1 ft. x 1 ft. If the coop is elevated, there must be a ramp with cleats every 6 inches.
7. Include roosts but do not place above food or water to prevent contamination.
8. Include one nesting box for every four chickens. Nesting boxes should contain nesting material such as straw and should be kept clean. Area of nesting box can be included in the minimum 4 ft² of space per bird.
9. Heat lamps are prohibited as they are a fire hazard and can cause chickens to prematurely molt.

Chicken Run:

1. Allow at least 16 square feet per bird.
2. Include food and water trays.
3. Provide some shading.
4. Make a structurally sound frame for the run, consider type of wood to be used to provide a durable, long-lasting structure that is easy to maintain and disassemble if necessary
5. Use a chicken wire or half-inch hardware cloth to construct the walls and ceiling of the chicken roof. Cover the bottom 2-3 feet of the walls in half inch hardware cloth. To discourage digging predators, extend the hardware cloth 12 inches below ground level and then extend out for at least a foot to create a below ground barrier. Before digging, any utility lines must be identified and marked.
6. The run should also be an inviting space for people to observe and hold the chickens, so it should be at least 6.5 feet tall.

Feed and Equipment Storage:

1. Ensure the storage is secure, weatherproof, rodent proof, and dry. Metal containers with tight lids are recommended.
2. Locate storage containers close to the chicken run and coop.
3. Provide space for feed, classroom equipment, cleaning supplies, safety equipment, and anything else to support lessons in the chicken area.

VI. Engaging Students

1. Begin each year by setting students' behavioral expectations. Create and agree on rules that students will hold themselves accountable for when working with chickens and assign roles/ jobs that students will be expected to fill.
2. Students should be taught how to approach, pick-up, hold, and set down a chicken properly.
3. Chickens can be used to teach all subjects and a wide range of topics. Use the resources section at the end of the document for ideas as well as the resources available to you on the internet and libraries. When at all possible, strive to use chickens to create connections between subjects.
4. Because chickens should not leave the run, consider constructing a large run and make it inviting for students.
5. Chickens will eat random objects that look like food. Their area should be kept clean of trash and students should be instructed to feed chickens only wholesome food.

VII. Community Relations

1. Post a notice on the coop/run notifying the community that the chickens are the property of the school and that they are being cared for daily throughout the year, including school holidays. The notice must include contact information for the school chicken program manager and an alternate so that community members can call with questions, concerns or to report a problem.
2. Pest issues, as soon as they are discovered, will be communicated to DPS Facilities Management and handled by appropriate Pest Control staff. School chicken programs are expected to comply and assist with pest management strategies as requested by DPS Facilities Management.
3. Complaints from the community will be responded to by the school within 24 hours and all formal complaints must also be shared with the DPS Sustainability Department.
4. Construct a run and coop that are attractive and won't be an eyesore to the neighbors.

DPS Chicken Management Plan Form and Agreement

School Information

Name: _____

School Address: _____

Chicken Program Contact Information

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone (accessible after school hours): _____

Affiliation with School: _____

Number of chickens on site: (1 - 8 hens) _____

Size of coop (in square feet) _____

Size of run (in square feet): _____

To be considered schools must:

Provide a map showing where the coop and run will be located on school grounds, delineating dimensions and distances from public sidewalks, school buildings, school walkways, playgrounds and school gardens.

Provide detailed schematic drawings of the run and coop design indicating all materials used for flooring, walls and roof.

Answer the following questions:

1. What procedures are in place to ensure hands are properly washed and that shoes are clean before and after handling of chickens and entering chicken area?

2. What procedures are in place to ensure staff, students and volunteers have been properly trained to enter the chicken area and handle chickens and their eggs?

3. How will you care for chickens in the event of unplanned school closings or extreme weather?

4. How will you ensure that the chicken area is secure?

5. Describe the feeding and watering schedule including:
 - a. What watering and feeding systems will be used?
 - b. How frequently will feed and treats be given?

6. Describe the day-to-day care and cleaning of the chickens as well as the chicken area. Include frequency of cleaning the run and coop as well as who will be responsible.

7. What procedures are in place to ensure the chickens are properly cared for over extended breaks of three or more days?

8. How will the eggs be collected, stored, and used?

9. Who is the Veterinarian whom you will utilize if you have a sick bird?

10. What is the exit plan for the chicken program if it is discontinued?

We, the undersigned, attest that we have thoroughly reviewed the DPS Requirements and Guidelines for Keeping Chickens on School Grounds. We attest that we will properly care for chickens under our care and that all staff, students and volunteers will be properly trained in proper care and safety and informed of the potential risks associated with chicken care and consumption of eggs. Furthermore, we will obtain and keep on file a signed Waiver and Release of Liability for all students and volunteers that will be involved in the care of chickens and maintenance of the run and coop. Finally, we recognize that the choice to keep chickens on school grounds is entirely that of the school and that DPS is not responsible for the chickens, the coop and run nor the health and safety of anyone engaged in the care of the school's chickens and that failure to comply with the management plan is grounds for the loss of the privilege to keep chickens at the school.

 School Principal (Print Name) Signature Date

 School Chicken Program Manager (Print Name) Signature Date

 DPS Sustainability Representative (Print Name) Signature Date

 DPS Grounds Representative (Print Name) Signature Date

 DPS Planning Representative (Print Name) Signature Date

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

By: 
 Office of the General Counsel

Resources

1. City and County of Denver, Food Producing Animals: Suggested Care Practices and Local Resources, Chickens, Ducks and Goats.
<https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/682/documents/Animal%20Protection/FPA%20Best%20Practices%20Handout%20-%20EV.pdf>
2. Food Safety Begins on the Farm: A Grower's Guide/ Good Agricultural Practices for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, Assessment Sections – Petting Zoos, Manure (www.GAPs.cornell.edu)
3. Texas A & M Cooperative Extension's Safety and Handling Procedures for Chickens. Shared by Jeff Raska, jwraska@ag.tamu.edu, May 12, 2014.
4. Salmonella and Backyard Chickens. Accessed July 15, 2014.
www.extension.org/pages/70621/salmonella-and-backyard-chickens
5. Risk of Human Salmonella Infections from Live Baby Poultry. Accessed July 15, 2014.
www.cdc.gov/Features/SalmonellaBabyBirds
6. Clauer, Phillip J. Small Scale Poultry Housing. Accessed July 15, 2014. Virginia Cooperative Extension. www.ext.vt.edu.
7. Clauer, Phillip J. Proper Handling of Eggs: From Hen to Consumption. Accessed July 15, 2014. Virginia Cooperative Extension. www.ext.vt.edu.
8. Ellis, Love, Moore, Haro-Marti. Composting and Using Backyard Poultry Waste in the Home Garden. University of Idaho Extension. Accessed July 15, 2014.
9. Clauer, Phillip J. Management Requirements for Laying Flocks. Accessed July 15, 2014. Virginia Cooperative Extension.
10. Ingham, Barbara and Ron Kean. Egg Safety and the Backyard Flock. Accessed July 15, 2014. University of Wisconsin Extension.
11. Bunning and Avens. Colorado State University Extension. Home-Produced Chicken Eggs. Fact Sheet No. 9.377
12. Colorado State University Extension. Raising poultry for small-scale production.
13. Darre, Michael. Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Poultry House.
<http://smallfarms.cornell.edu/2014/04/07/cleaning-and-disinfecting-your-poultry-house/>
Accessed July 16, 2014.

Hens, feed & supplies

- Murray McMurray Hatchery (www.mcmurrayhatchery.com)
- The Urban Farm (www.theurbanfarm.org)
- Coops and organic chicken feed are available from Denver Urban Homesteading (303•534•8700, www.denverurbanhomesteading.com)
- www.mypetchicken.com: for info / orders for as few as three hens (will guarantee the sex)
- Golden Mill, (1012 Ford Street, Golden, CO 80401 303-279-1151) feed store and chickens (will guarantee the sex)
- High Altitude Organics, organic chicks and feed (highaltitudeorganics.com)

Other

- Urban Hens, program of UC Boulder, can answer questions, provide technical support and help find new homes for chickens (Wynn.Martens@Colorado.EDU)
- The Old Feed Store (970.493.0320, 3612 W County Rd 54g, Laporte, CO 80535)

Appendix A: Waiver and Release of Liability

In consideration of the desire to participate in the care of the school's chickens, collection of eggs and maintenance and repair of the chicken coop, all students and volunteers must have a signed [DPS Waiver and Release of Liability](#) on file with the school for working with the chickens, with the full understanding that handling chickens and their eggs and working in a chicken coop may expose individuals to Salmonella and other potential risks.

Denver Public Schools

ENTERPRISE RISK MANAGEMENT

Tel: 720-423-1300

<http://risk.dpsk12.org>

RiskManagement@dpsk12.org



Waiver and Release of Liability

In consideration of being allowed to participate in the **care and maintenance of school chickens and their coop/run** ("Activity"), to the extent permitted by law I hereby forever discharge, release, and hold harmless School District No. 1, in the City and County of Denver and State of Colorado (the "District"), and its employees, officers, directors, agents, representatives, and authorized volunteers (collectively, the "Releasees") from any and all liability, claims, demands, actions, and causes of action arising from or related to any loss, damage, or injury, including death, that may be sustained by me, or to any property belonging to me, while participating in the Activity.

I am fully aware of the potential risks and hazards and I hereby elect to voluntarily participate in the Activity. I knowingly and freely assume all potential risks, known and unknown, including those arising from the negligence of the Releasees.

I, for myself and on behalf of my heirs, assigns, personal representatives and next of kin, further agree to indemnify and hold harmless the Releasees from any loss, liability, damage or costs, including court costs and attorneys' fees, that Releasees may incur due to my participating in the Activity, including those caused by the negligence of the Releasees or otherwise.

I have read this Waiver and Release of Liability ("Agreement") and fully understand its terms. I also understand that I have given up substantial rights by signing it and sign it freely and voluntarily without any inducement. I am at least eighteen (18) years of age and fully competent to sign this Agreement.

Participant (Print Name)

Signature

Date

*Parent/Guardian (Print Name)

Signature

Date

(* If Participant under 18 years of age)