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LD 1655

Good Afternoon Members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee  
I testified Neither for nor Against on this bill. I commented directly on the bill (sent separately) and sent it in as well as testified via Zoom.

I kept chickens when I was a kid growing up on a farm in Hudson and since 2012 here on my land where they can safely roam; I have not bought commercial eggs for 13 years. I truly believe in and support food sovereignty since home grown produce gives us the best nutrition and food security. Growing produce creates an appreciation of how hard it is to be a farmer.

I love my chickens and all the reasons Rep. Poirier gave for keeping them are valid. They are good for eating food scraps and bugs (if you don't spray pesticides, herbicides or rodenticides ) and are fun to watch run amok across the yard as they aerate and fertilize the soil. Plus, commercial eggs don't even come close to the taste of fresh natural eggs.

But, it never fails that people want to become instant farmers whenever the price of food rises.

I can confidently state that keeping chickens for eggs is not going to save money.

Depending on the breed, it can take 4 - 9 months for a hen to lay her first egg. Until then you will have to buy special feed, heat lamps to keep them warm, fresh water daily and buy a coop that you will dish out anywhere from \$200 - \$600 at a local store that is never large enough for the amount of chickens they claim.

So it's a long time and a lot of money and effort spent before you get that great tasting first egg.

Also, some of those cute little chicks will become roosters that no one wants. They often get taken out to the country and let loose on farms by people thinking they will be taken in or adapt to life on the farm.

That life is short and brutal since roosters crow to advertise where they are and are easy prey.

Keeping them in an urban neighborhood will attract predators never seen before, which will turn to other prey, like pets, when they can't get into your coop. Or, if they gain access, will kill indiscriminately until all your flock is dead.

Chickens are probably the most prone livestock to look for ways to die. Unless you know a vet who treats chickens you will have to treat them yourself. They can seem perfectly healthy one day and die the next or fly off their perch and break their neck; so keepin' chickens is not for the squeamish or faint of heart.

Plus now you have a dead chicken, or more, to dispose of.

Close confinement, which the original bill required, is cruel and causes diseases and respiratory problems, not to mention death by other chickens who prey on each other to make room. The "pecking order" is a real thing with chickens who eliminate the weak as it is the survival of the flock that counts.

The coop and run sizes in the original bill are not adequate for 36 or even 12 chickens. But having no requirements for coop and run sizes is worse. I am tolerant of the ignorance of people who grab all the seeds or yeast packets when things get tough, like we saw in the beginning of the pandemic, but when it comes to live animals I have to speak out.

Rather than spending a lot of money on having your own flock, which takes a 24/7 365 day a year commitment, people would be better served supporting local farmers, joining a food co-op or establishing a community coop project near a community supported garden where the labor, and eggs, can be shared.

Animals are not products to serve a temporary purpose. I have kept chickens 30 years of my life and still lose a few every year due to lack of luck or learnin'. They can also

live up to 10 years, during which they will not be producing.

I also have issues with a state mandate to force a statewide ordinance on citizens who live in urban areas; municipalities' ordinances are in place for a reason. If people don't like the rules there are ways to change them rather than a blanket bill that will, intentionally or not, place livestock in areas where they cannot thrive by roaming free, or are placed in closed quarters to pacify the neighbors. Animal Cruelty, either through negligence or lack of experience, is unacceptable.

Please leave the raising of chickens to the farmers who would benefit from your support. Or take an animal husbandry course at your local educational outlet like the university cooperative extension or a farming group like Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners.

It is always the animals who suffer from people learning the skills of livestock rearing by trial and error.

~Kat Taylor  
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