

Congratulations on your decision to raise chickens in Oshkosh. This guide is intended to provide you with information concerning the municipal regulations for keeping chickens, as well as to provide tips to help you successfully raise backyard hens.

Please carefully review all of the municipal requirements listed. Responsible management of your chickens and chicken coop is an essential part of the sustained success of this movement and continued support of our community.

The raising of chickens on your property can serve as a valuable community-building experience by inviting friends and neighbors over to participate, by educating our youth about natural life-systems and where their food comes from, and by sharing the “eggs” of your labor.

Have fun, be responsible and good luck!

*Justin Mitchell*

Justin Mitchell  
Chair, Sustainability Advisory Board, 2011



## BENEFITS OF RAISING CHICKENS

### Raising Chickens is Fun and Interesting

Backyard chickens can be an enjoyable experience for the whole family and neighbors, including playing, feeding, and just observing these unique birds.

### Positive Educational Opportunity

Children (and adults) will learn about where food comes from and develop responsibility for the care of an animal.

### Healthy, Local & Sustainable Protein Source

For households seeking to produce their own food, the eggs gathered from backyard chickens provides the needed source of protein that is often missing. As a benefit, well-treated backyard chickens tend to produce extremely high quality eggs.

### Chickens are Great for Your Garden

Chickens are huge consumers of bugs and pests, making them a welcomed addition to any garden. Their waste is also an effective and natural fertilizer.

### Healthy Activities Can Build Community

Over 100 residents came together to make backyard chickens a possibility in Oshkosh. Community members attended planning meetings, workshops, and community events collaborating on this effort. Many cities continue to see events and gatherings surrounding urban chickens and local foods.

## City Ordinance Requirements

(see Chapter 6 (Animals) and Chapter 30 (Zoning) of City Codes for complete requirements)

- You must obtain an annual city license from city hall (\$10.00), and obtain written approval from abutting neighbors before obtaining chickens
- You must register your property with the free Wisconsin Livestock Registry ([www.wiild.org](http://www.wiild.org))
- You must provide a chicken coop in your rear yard that meets the following requirements:
  - ⇒ Structurally sound, moisture proof and maintained in good repair with sufficient space for freedom of movement and retention of body heat
  - ⇒ Provide a sufficient quantity of suitable clean bedding material
  - ⇒ Must be enclosed, predator-proof, free of rodents, insulated, and adequately vented, with elevated perches for natural roosting position
  - ⇒ A minimum size of 7 square feet in area or 3 square feet in area per chicken, whichever is greater with 1 nest box for every 2 chickens
  - ⇒ Must be at least 25 feet from a neighbor's primary residence, at least 3 feet from the side & rear property lines and at least 5 feet from your residence
- Maximum of 4 hens per residential lot
- Roosters are **not** permitted
- The slaughter, abuse or neglect of any chicken is strictly prohibited
- The chickens should be provided regular access to water and food
- Hens must be secured in their coop at night, and be provided access to an outdoor enclosed run area for the majority of daylight hours



# A How-to Guide for Raising Backyard Chickens in Oshkosh

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## Tips for Successfully Raising Hens

### Raising From Eggs:

Eggs need 21 days of incubation, requiring turning at least 3-4 times per day. Maintain temperatures between 99 and 103° F. A small dish of water must be added to maintain moisture. Ventilation is important. Small scale incubators are available for a low cost that maintain temperature and automatically rotate the eggs. After the 17<sup>th</sup> day, eggs should no longer be rotated. After the chicks hatch and have dried, place them in a holder heated to 95°F. Provide a starter mash feed and fresh water. If you are considering raising chicks from eggs, please reference a complete guide on the process to ensure understanding of the many small details that help improve health and success. Also consider that you will need to find a home for any young roosters.

### Raising From Chicks:

Raising young chicks – as young as a few days – is the easiest and most common method. 1-week old chicks need a temperature of 90-95°F. Raise the heat lamp each week to lower 5° F until about 70-75° F. Ensure constant access to water and provide a starter feed. You should provide a half square foot of space per

bird, increasing around week 4. This holder – or brooder – can be a box. Start with layers of newspaper on the bottom and replace with pine shavings at week 2. Make sure the walls are tall enough to prevent jumping out. A circular brooder prevents the piling up in corners.

### Shelter & Run

The coop should be sturdy, insulated, and at least 3 square feet in size per hen, with a minimum size of 7 square feet. Elevated perches must be provided as well as 1 nesting box every 2 hens. Nesting boxes should be about 18 in H x 18 in L x 12 in W, with a slanted roof to discourage roosting on top of the box. Add pine bedding to the boxes, and a small lip to the bottom of the entrance to prevent the egg from rolling out. Heat may be needed during the cold winter months, and light may extend the egg-laying season (birds need at least 14 hours of light per day to produce eggs). Maintain 3-4 inches of litter (pine shavings) in winter to help insulate. Keep interior dry. Ensure a tight enclosure to keep out predators. A run must be provided, offering ground access that is fenced in. Sizes of the run will vary, but should be long enough to enable running (6–10 ft minimum length) and wide enough to enable wing extension (3–6 ft minimum width).

### Selecting a Hen

There are many different breeds of hens, and you are encouraged to research what type of hen fits your needs and interests. UW-Extension recommends Leghorns, Minorca, or Buttercups for egg-laying.

### Feeding, Health & Safety

You should provide access to food multiple times per day, with constant access to water. Feed is available at many local farm supply stores and through feed distributors. Chickens will also enjoy many of your table scraps. You need to keep your food stored in a secure manner in order to prevent rodents. You also need to regularly clean out the litter to ensure a dry, clean environment that prevents the presence of pests and rodents.

### Composting

You are encouraged to compost your poultry waste to use as a garden or yard additive. Poultry waste is high in nitrogen, an essential nutrient for plants. Waste should be composted in a predator-proof container to make it garden-ready, and should be applied at least 120 days prior to harvesting any food. Follow the UW-Extension guide for composting chicken waste.

## Additional Resources

*Wisconsin Livestock Identification Consortium (Livestock Registry):*

Register online at [www.wiid.org](http://www.wiid.org)

Or phone WLIC at 888-808-1910

*Information about Wisconsin Livestock Registry:*  
[http://datcp.wi.gov/Farms/Livestock/Livestock\\_Premises\\_Registration](http://datcp.wi.gov/Farms/Livestock/Livestock_Premises_Registration)

*Local sustainable initiatives and updates:*  
[www.ci.oshkosh.wi.us/SustainableOshkosh](http://www.ci.oshkosh.wi.us/SustainableOshkosh)

*City youth participation in 4-H poultry activities:*  
<http://winnebago.uwex.edu/4-h-youth-development>

*Information on the raising of backyard chickens:*  
[www.backyardchickens.com](http://www.backyardchickens.com)

*Resources and links to improve your skills and knowledge related to raising chickens:*  
[www.beginningfarmers.org/information-about-raising-chickens](http://www.beginningfarmers.org/information-about-raising-chickens)

*Networking opportunity with others in the community raising hens:*  
[www.facebook.com/OshkoshBackyardChickens](http://www.facebook.com/OshkoshBackyardChickens)