

**Show Transcript**  
**Deconstructing Dinner**  
**Kootenay Co-op Radio CJLY**  
**Nelson, B.C. Canada**

**July 1, 2010**

**Title: VANCOUVER'S BACKYARD CHICKENS II / BUCKY BUCKAW**

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**Transcript: Pat Yama**

JON STEINMAN: And welcome to Deconstructing Dinner, produced in Nelson, British Columbia at Kootenay Co-op Radio, CJLY. I'm Jon Steinman and today marks our 180<sup>th</sup> episode of this weekly radio show and podcast now into its 5<sup>th</sup> year. This show airs on fifty stations throughout North America.

As promised on our June 17<sup>th</sup> episode, we'll be continuing today with our coverage of the new bylaw in the City of Vancouver that now permits the raising of up to four backyard chickens within City limits. While backyard poultry is a pretty well-established practice around the world, there are many North American cities, especially here in Canada who have been engaging in similar processes as Vancouver and considering rescinding what have long been *prohibitions* on the raising of chickens within urban centres.

On part 1 of our coverage we heard how the City of Vancouver years ago supported the creation of a Food Policy Council, later supported the adoption of a Food Charter and both of which contributed to the many clips that we heard on that show of City Councillors debating the issue and hearing statements from the public. On today's part 2, we'll continue looking back on those public comments including statements that were made in *opposition* to the proposed bylaw change from the Vancouver Humane Society and the BC SPCA, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Among other voices we'll also listen to the City of Vancouver's policy analyst Lily Ford who presented to Vancouver's City Councillors and the Mayor back in April. Ford presented the recommended guidelines that the City has now since adopted.

And as we so often do here on the show whenever backyard chickens are a focus, we'll hear once again from Bucky Buckaw and his backyard chicken broadcast.

*increase music and fade out*

Before we descend into Vancouver and continue our coverage of the City's new backyard chicken bylaw and the process they underwent to get there, we'll hear again from Bucky Buckaw and his Backyard Chicken broadcast. Produced in New York City, Bucky got his start producing his short radio segments on backyard chickening as part of the Sagebrush Variety Show at Boise Community Radio in Boise, Idaho. His latest segment was inspired by Deconstructing Dinner's October 2009 episode featuring New York chef Dan Barber. The segment is titled "Why I Eat Chicken."

*Bucky Buckaw – Why I Eat Chicken*  
*BB show theme*

This is Bucky Buckaw with The Backyard Chicken broadcast.

People often ask me if I eat chicken. They don't know what answer to expect, I guess because I'm a little coy about the topic on the broadcast. I don't talk about it often because I'm not interested in being in the position of calling myself a moral authority. I do believe there are right choices to make about food having to do with aesthetics, health, and ethics. And I also believe most of those choices are applicable to most and maybe even all folks especially since food choices potentially deplete, pollute or imbalance our shared resources. Still I believe diet is ultimately a personal decision. I just urge others to make it a well-informed personal decision.

Many listeners may think I may be a vegetarian because I talk about how chickens provide eggs and improve vegetable gardens but I rarely bring up meat. And because I often talk about how adorable chickens are. However I'm not a vegetarian, anymore. I've been a vegetarian almost half my life and was a vegan for a decade. Now, I do eat meat. I try as much as I can to eat locally, organically, naturally, humanely-raised food and indeed my rules are more complicated than they were when I was a vegetarian or a vegan. On the other hand, I should probably call them guidelines rather than rules because I have to admit, I'll often change or bend them. In a lot of ways, it was easier to be vegetarian. I use to think and still sometimes do that self-proclaimed omnivores have a tendency to rationalize what they feel like eating which is not always the wrong approach to ethics but obviously makes it a lot more difficult to claim dispassionate or objective thinking, if you believe such things exist.

But eventually, I started to believe some of those rationalizations or whatever they were, myself. On the one hand I heard all the arguments about corporate organic veggies and soy, displacing habitats in some of the ways animal agriculture does, even causing pollution. That too much soy or grapeseed oil or agave nectar can be as bad for you as high cholesterol meats and cheeses. And I started thinking more about what's possible in local and seasonal eating. At the same time I started seeing more and more meat making apparently credible claims to raising animals for slaughter under conditions that were not so objectionable. After all, I had stopped being literally vegan for years making the exception of only eating eggs laid by the spoiled hens living in my own backyard. Later, after I'd been an omnivore for quite awhile, an episode of one of my favourite broadcasts of all time, syndicated food policy show Deconstructing Dinner, had a big influence on my thinking – not the first time the show had impacted my thinking and one of the reasons I'm so proud to be featured on it from time to time.

In October '09 the CONSCIENTIOUS COOK'S episode featured Dan Barber of Blue Hills visit to a French farm in natural foie gras producer. Hearing that the farmers methods of making foie gras were the opposite of every objectionable practice that makes foie gras so controversial was impressive to me. But even more impressive was to hear that the foie gras was winning awards to the consternation of traditional producers and that the farmer insisted that this was the way to do it. No force feeding but providing the kind of goose buffet that inspired them to pig out of their own accord. But what really sent me over the top was the revelation that wild geese flying

overhead came to stay and bred with his domesticated flock. That's how he maintained population and genetic diversity.

It made me reflect on a deeper level about my own chickens and other small-scale livestock I'd met. And the trade-off struck between domesticated animals and humans who do our utmost to anticipate their every need ultimately friends that principled animal rights folks would characterize as exploitation. I was never inclined to agree with those folks, yet I was not quite sure if the burden of proof was on me to show the animals were getting a good deal if my perspective could truly pass muster. My animals seemed happy, quite happy. They made little effort to leave and ultimately always came home to roost. But still, they really didn't have a choice in the matter. They were born into domestication. But the wild geese in that episode illustrated that animals do make that choice. And furthermore, the show referred, for detail to a book by Stephen Budiansky, an author, historian, and journalist. Budiansky has written books about military and intelligence, history, science, and the natural world and is also a unique voice among the emerging category of animal writers. I encourage my listeners to explore his work. The crux of "The Covenant of the Wild: Why Animals Choose Domestication" is not previously unheard of or difficult to follow. In it, he thoroughly and entertainingly documents the history of animal domestication as a process that provides advantages to both humans and animals. Certain animals actually chose domestication, preferring the reliable comfort of captivity to the dangers of feral life. It points out that domesticated animals do not face extinction. What I like the least about the book is his references to so-called animal rights extremists. Although he does not generalize, there is a tone to the book that some anti-vegetarians and militant carnivores have latched onto. Ultimately, it's clear that Budiansky is an animal lover and I guess I wish he could help break the cycle of contention between those who think animals deserve no consideration at all and those of you who see oppression in everything from redundant animal testing to puppy mills, to backyard coops. At one point he even seems to argue that factory farms might be more comfortable than jungle life. Yet it rings rhetorical as if he's obliged himself to follow his own logic to an extreme he might not sincerely believe. On the other hand I was intrigued with his descriptions of how humans have changed significantly as a result of animal domestication, both culturally and physically, implying the question – who domesticated who?

But don't get me wrong. It's not exactly case closed, problem solved. Truthfully, my personal agricultural explorations stop short of the homesteading practices I admire. I don't know if I'd have the heart to slaughter chickens by my own hand. And I still feel a hypocrite for leaving that responsibility to others. It fascinates me when small-scale farmers and homesteaders who do slaughter animals talk openly about the heartbreak of the process but are resolved to the fact that it's also part of the big picture. There are folks like the '60s back to earth pioneers – Helen and Scott Nearing, who managed a homestead without ever eating animal products. Yet most people who feed themselves argue very convincingly from personal experience that for humans to eat, something else has to die, either from loss of habitat, from being hunted, or from being coddled up to the day of slaughter. Eating is about survival yet we can and should do it with style, joy, and ethics. Not necessarily in that order.

When the Bucky Buckaw agenda hits the plate, it's less about what's there but how it got there. And not just the means of production but also about making personal food decisions. And where I think my personal experience is relevant to others is that for me, struggling with the question of

what to eat doesn't detract from my enjoyment of the meal but in fact enhances it. Just as the effort of growing your own veggies or raising chickens makes your meal taste better than if you just popped into the grocery on your way home.

This has been Bucky Buckaw. I had a good time.

*BB show theme*

Bucky Buckaw's Backyard Chicken broadcast that's produced by the Sagebrush Variety Show with the support of Boise Community Radio and Green Institute.

JON STEINMAN: This is Deconstructing Dinner.

We'll hear from Bucky again at the end of today's show when he'll share the many uses of *eggshells*. But until then, part II of our coverage on the City of Vancouver's new bylaw that now permits the raising of up to four hens per household. We've been reflecting on the process that the city went through to finally arrive at the decision and we can begin where we last left off, in March 2009 when the City's Planning and Environment Committee heard from the public on the motion that Councillor Andrea Reimer had introduced that called for the City's prohibitive bylaw on backyard chickens to be repealed. Speaking in opposition to the motion at that meeting was Leanne McConnachie, the Director of Farm Animal Programs at the Vancouver Humane Society.

*March 2009 Council Meeting*

LEANNE MCCONNACHIE: The Vancouver's Humane Society "chicken out" program aims to phase out battery cages for egg-laying hens by encouraging those who buy eggs to purchase only free-range eggs from audited and certified farms. We've worked for the universities, businesses, and government municipalities such as the Vancouver City Council and most recently Metro Vancouver Regional District to adopt policies, purchasing policies that favour cage-free eggs. So we thank you for your support on these initiatives. And we also commend Councillors Reimer and Deal for bringing forward a motion that gets chickens out of cages and brings with it numerous environmental benefits.

In an ideal world where all humans are responsible for the animals under their care, the motion to allow backyard chickens would be acceptable. And I'm sure that the people here today, who have the situations that they have are like Club Med and I wish everybody was like them. And they have the scientific background as well to provide the proper care. However, as the Vancouver Humane Society's main concern is the welfare of animals, we are speaking in opposition to this motion. It is our experience that even the best-intentioned people sometimes fail to have the financial resources, the temperament, or even the permanency in their housing situation to properly care for their animals. Every day we are reminded of cases of abuse, neglect and irresponsibility towards domestic farm and exotic animals despite the availability of training services and humane education programs and despite laws and enforcement procedures to protect those animals. Although the motion is proposing policy guidelines to ensure humane treatment of hens, if interest becomes widespread and I do underline widespread, how will the City ever be

able to hire the resources necessary to check up on potentially hundreds of urban backyard operations to see if people are following the regulations.

And having said all this I think the important question to ask ourselves is why this motion is before Council in the first place and other municipal councils as well. We believe that the reason is that people are concerned with the health and safety of our food supply. The mistreatment of animals from factory farms and the environmental degradation that industrialized agriculture can cause. Citizens are therefore turning to ideas such as keeping their own food producing animals to guarantee for themselves the food they eat comes from healthy and happy animals. There's no question that we need to phase out practices like battery cage operations that are detrimental to the well-being of the animals and to the environment. But allowing everyone to become backyard poultry farmers is not the answer for creating greener, local and humanely produced food.

We believe our strategy with Chicken-Out, to encourage demand for consumers and businesses for certified cage-free eggs in order to influence supply and thus influence production methods is the correct approach. Egg farming should be left for those certified professionals who have proven that they know how to best care for their flocks. With increasing demand for certified egg products, industry and provincial and federal governments will be forced to respond and provide the proper management and oversight our food system requires. We are therefore asking Council not to approve this motion. If however, what Council seeks is more locally, environmentally friendly cage-free production of eggs, we would suggest Council seek improvements to available farm land in the City and improvements to B.C.'s egg supply management scheme. We urge Council therefore to contact the authorities in the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, Farm Industry Review Board and B.C. Egg Marketing Board to ensure the public's interest is being met.

JON STEINMAN: The Vancouver Humane Society's, Leanne McConnachie speaking to Vancouver's Planning and Environment Committee in March 2009. Also speaking in opposition to what at that time was the *proposed* change to Vancouver's prohibition of backyard chickens was Shawn Eckles, the Chief Animal Protection Officer for the BC Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the SPCA.

SHAWN ECKLES: BC SPCA echoes the comments of the Vancouver Humane Society as well. We're speaking against the proposal before the Council for a variety of reasons. Certainly these first two speakers that came forward today are probably what we have considered to be model citizens and model hen owners. They're not the sorts of individuals that the SPCA officers see in the regular day-to-day operation of the Society. We'll probably never meet with them other than in something like today's meeting. Some of the considerations that we're concerned about and the reasons that we are opposed to the issue that's been brought forward are the care of the animals - who is actually going to have the experience, knowledge and expertise with respect to the care of raising poultry. There is significant issues with respect to the welfare of these animals. It's not just a matter of putting them in cages and providing them feed and water. We're going to ensure that the five freedom is being met and five freedoms are freedoms that have been recognized globally with respect to animals in our care.

There's a significant concern with respect to predation and the second speaker referred to neighbour's actually throwing dogs into yards. There's some significant concerns with respect to the increase in predation. Certainly the City of Vancouver currently has some significant issues with respect to coyotes, racoons and skunks. This could potentially increase the level of predation upon those hens. There's certainly an opportunity for an increase in species interaction – dogs and hens. I'm not speaking for Animal Control and I don't work with Animal Control so I don't know what your level of dog attacks are in the City of Vancouver but certainly this would be potentially an increase for issues with respect to dog attacks and perhaps an increased level of vicious or dangerous dogs within the City of Vancouver.

The issue of euthanasia is of significant concern to the BC SPCA. There are currently – I'm not aware of any veterinarians within the City of Vancouver that are currently poultry veterinarians, probably because of the fact that poultry are not raised within the City of Vancouver. Most of the poultry veterinarians will be in the valley. So there's a concern with respect to where those animal owners are going to be obtaining veterinary care for those animals. Certainly we see issues in some communities that we operate within throughout British Columbia. The District of Powell River has no livestock veterinarians in their community. The veterinary visits once a month and we see significant levels of animal abuse and neglect within the District of Powell River with regards to farm animals.

JON STEINMAN: This is Deconstructing Dinner. That was Shawn Eckles of the BC SPCA speaking in March 2009 to the City of Vancouver's Planning and Environment Committee. Today's episode marks part 2 of our coverage of the City of Vancouver's new backyard chicken bylaw, which, in June of 2010 was officially adopted despite the opposition to the proposed change that we just heard. Deconstructing Dinner has maintained an ongoing urban agriculture series here on the show with a focus on backyard chickens and as part of this latest focus on the City of Vancouver, we've been reflecting on the process that the City went through to eventually permit chickens within the City. On our June 17<sup>th</sup> 2010 episode, we did also hear a number of *proponents* speak in favour of allowing backyard chickens in Vancouver. And another one of those proponents who we did *not* hear from was an agroecology student from the University of British Columbia. The student spoke about a recurring concern among many city councils.

#### June 17<sup>th</sup> 2010 Council Meeting

JORDON: My name is Jordon. I'm an agroecology student which means sustainable agriculture at UBC. I'm in third year and I live in Southlands which is near UBC. We currently have 18 chickens and I spent the last five months or so researching urban chickens in Vancouver and I've been compiling a report called "A Beginner's Guide to Urban Chicken-Keeping in Vancouver." I feel like keeping chickens in Vancouver is a viable option as is demonstrated by New York, Victoria, and Portland and many other cities in the U.S. But there are some issues of concerns which I've addressed in my report. But all these concerns can be addressed in the amended bylaw and aren't an issue at this meeting. As Mr. Seto, Andrea Reimer and Shawn Eckles discussed earlier, one of the primary concerns is what to do with chickens at the end of their productive life.

So a chicken will typically live for fifteen years if it's well cared for, but they're only productive laying eggs for two or three years. So what do we do with chickens at the end of that time. Some

who grew up on a farm would say just chop it's head off but as some people mentioned, that's a concern. Neighbours don't want that happening in the backyard.

So there's four options besides backyard slaughter to do with your chickens. You can have them euthanized at the vet and I just want to echo what Leanne McConnachie said – she said that we don't have sufficient poultry vets in Vancouver. And actually I have a list here of five or six vets that I've talked to that have said that they do take poultry. And also I've had chickens for twenty years and I've hardly ever taken the chickens to the vet. Another option besides slaughter is you can send them to a retirement home. There's one in Salt Spring where they can live out their life. You can keep them as a pet which most people will probably choose to do or you can take them to a local abattoir to have them slaughtered and use its meat. And our local abattoir is in Langley.

JON STEINMAN: A reminder that today's episode is archived on-line at [deconstructingdinner.ca](http://deconstructingdinner.ca) and posted under the July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010 broadcast. Links to more resources on today's topic can be found there including links to unedited video streaming of some of the committee meetings that we're hearing clips from today. Rounding off that March 2009 meeting was Councillor Andrea Reimer who had introduced the motion to permit backyard chickens in Vancouver and she shared these final observations.

#### *Council Meeting – March 2009*

ANDREA REIMER: You know I have to say that when I first brought this motion forward or considered bringing it forward, it was primarily as a – I think backyard hens are important but – we removed bee control bylaw a few years back, about five years ago now – and we haven't seen thousands of people picking up the mantle of beehive keeping and I guess I suspected with hens it would be similar but that we would remove the barriers to those that want it removed but that it's not going to create a mass movement. So imagine my surprise in wanting to support a citizen who had written a letter and the Food Policy Council and other twenty odd citizens who had taken the time to do the research to bring forward what I thought was a rather modest proposal that has turned into something of a raging chicken debate. And I don't mean to trivialize peoples' concerns because they're quite serious concerns. If we move forward with this, we are about to embark on a situation of writing guidelines that are far more stringent than those that we have for dogs, which are predators and predators living amongst prey – humans, children. So I'm happy to see the level of rigour with which people have approached this and I think we'll have the benefit of places that have done this already.

To that end, change is challenging. To find out today that we had emus, ostriches, parakeets, pigeons, various things living amongst us - apparently being buried in our backyards. We have wild birds that are much more likely to come into contact with avian flu by virtue of the fact that they fly back and forth between the Valley and the City and yet we have no policies, regulations, or guidelines for monitoring that. And yet we're pretty freaked out about the idea of two or three hens living in our backyards – tells me about the work we need to do on things like the Greenest City Action Team and various other initiatives that we have. So I'm still pleased to forward the motion. I do hope that people will support. I did check in with Mayor Corrigan and Burnaby has not been bankrupted yet by enforcing the bylaw's related to chickens in the city. I was just there the other day to check out some hens in backyards and the street was not clogged with racoons

and coyotes or anything of the like so I think with proper guidelines we can make this work for everyone.

JON STEINMAN: From that point forward, it was agreed that City staff would draw up a set of guidelines that would become the city's new backyard chicken bylaw. That subsequent report which is linked to on the Deconstructing Dinner website was presented to that same committee one year later in April 2010. Presenting the recommendations to the City's Planning and Environment Committee was Lily Ford a Policy Analyst with the City's license office.

#### April 2010 Recommendations

LILY FORD: In a little over a year ago, Council approved a resolution asking that the prohibition on hens that is currently in the Animal Control bylaw be lifted and also directing staff to come up with guidelines for the keeping of backyard hens that would ensure humane treatment of hens and also protect public health and safety. And the resolution was in keeping with the Vancouver Food Charter that was adopted in 2007 which outlines the City's commitment to just and sustainable food system.

So, since the March 2009 resolution, we have researched practices in other cities that allow keeping of the chickens in which it generally had positive experiences. We've researched best management practices recommended by government agencies, co-operative extensions and other poultry authorities and we've consulted with and incorporated the suggestions – many of the suggestions of a number of interested parties that are listed up there. Our working document during consultation was a set of draft guidelines which Council received in September. And in October we asked interested parties to comment on the draft guidelines and we got a generally positive response, both in meetings and in written correspondence. So this chart just shows the level of support in written correspondence. This is not to say that there is this level of support in general for the proposal but just that those who were involved in the process early on were reasonably happy with the guidelines.

So in doing our research and consultation, we identified a number of public health and humane issues which are summarized in this table. And as we came up with solutions to address these issues, we found that some suggestions for regulations raised red flags and that people wanted to be able to keep chickens without a lot of red tape. So in essence I added a third mandate that we not only allow the keeping of backyard hens but that we make the process for doing so relatively uncomplicated. So our recommendations has really been shaped by dynamics between these three mandates. And in some cases the dynamics have been complementary, for instance in prohibiting backyard slaughtering. That addresses concerns from both a public health and a humane perspective. But in other cases the mandates have been conflicting. For instance the requirement that we're recommending to keep hens enclosed is an important safeguard against the spread of avian flu but from a humane perspective free-ranging is preferred. In such cases, the public health concerns take a priority but we have tried to mitigate the humane impact by requiring in this case adequate space within the hen enclosures.

JON STEINMAN: Lily Ford of the City of Vancouver. The recommendation that all backyard hens be kept within enclosures did not sit well with some Vancouver residents, a sentiment that was expressed at the subsequent public hearing that took place in May, when it was suggested that

the enclosure requirement be revisited next year to potentially open up for the option of more free-ranging backyard hens.

Another concern that Ford helped address was in response to what a number of councillors had viewed as a significant threat - avian flu. Despite many authorities on the matter insisting that disease transfer among urban chickens is a very *minimal* concern, some of the recommended guidelines presented to council back in April address the possibility.

#### April 2010 Recommendations

LILY FORD: So I want to do a quick review of the animal control provisions that we're recommending, starting with the most basic recommendation. We're recommending a maximum four hens per lot. Four laying hens produce about 20 eggs per week, enough for an average family and is a small enough flock that nuisance and abuse issues are minimized. We are also recommending that roosters and chicks not be allowed. Roosters for the obvious noise reasons and chicks for humane reasons. We want to prevent the impulse buying of cute fuzzy chicks that often are abandoned once they become more demanding hens or roosters as the case may be. And that's the second reason for prohibiting chicks. Many supposedly female chicks turn out to be hundred decibel roosters. We're also recommending no commercial use of the eggs or other products and no backyard slaughtering. We've also included a basic care requirements sufficient to maintain the hens in good health and measures to ensure that pest and predation don't become a problem. And we've also included manure management recommendations to control odour and issues. Under the animal by-law we also have some housing requirements, both space requirements and features that will allow the hens to live a reasonably healthy and happy life in their enclosures.

Other housing provisions and these are in the zoning amendments include a maximum height to reduce potential visual impact and a maximum floor area which will allow enclosures to be built without a development permit – without going through that process. There's also a model called a chicken tractor with a coop up top and an enclosure on the bottom and this is really a space saving model. And it also can be moved in your yard to give the chickens fresh pasture that can reduce overgrazing.

So zoning, we're recommending that chickens be allowed to be kept in all single and multi-family residential zones. We're recommending that they not be allowed in front yards. They would be allowed in side yards but on most lots there wouldn't be enough room given the other setbacks that we're recommending. The one exception is on corner lots and we have special recommendation for those that would allow them in the side yards and to have a reduced side setback.

JON STEINMAN: This is Deconstructing Dinner produced at Nelson, British Columbia's Kootenay Co-op Radio. I'm Jon Steinman and today's episode is part of our ongoing FARMING IN THE CITY series here on the show, with today's focus being on the City of Vancouver, where on June 8<sup>th</sup> it became official that backyard chickens can now be raised within City limits. We first began exploring this as part of our June 17<sup>th</sup> broadcast and as we continue to this part 2 of that coverage, we've been reflecting on the *process* that the City went through to get to this point - a

process that would likely be of interest to the many cities throughout North America who are too considering repealing their *own prohibitive* backyard chicken bylaws.

We've just been listening in on the City of Vancouver's Lily Ford who among a number of City staff helped compiled the recommendations that were presented to City Council in April 2010. Another of the recommendations was the establishment of an online registration system where resources on raising backyard hens would also become available.

#### April 2010 Recommendations

LILY FORD: Another major feature of our recommendations is the registry for people who own hens. It would be available online or by phone and it would be mandatory but there would be registration fees under our recommendation. And it would also be loaded with a bunch of educational resources on keeping chickens which would be on required screens on online registry and would be sent out to individuals who register by phone. So why a registry. Well the purpose of the registry is really three-fold. It would provide information to help authorities in the unlikely event that there was a disease outbreak. It's a form for providing educational resources to hen keepers, including information on chicken keeping workshops. And it also would provide a snapshot of hen keeping in the city so that we have a good idea on how and where hen keeping is working in the City.

JON STEINMAN: And the last segment we'll listen in on of Lily Ford presenting the recommended backyard chicken guidelines for the City of Vancouver involves enforcement and what became somewhat of a contentious issue for some Councillors – the recommended \$20,000 capital expense to develop an area of the City's animal shelter for chickens.

#### April 2010 Recommendations

LILY FORD: Most of the regulations would be enforced by Animal Control and they would be enforced on a complaint basis. And the existing penalties and procedures for other animals that are in the Animal Control bylaw would apply. Animal Control's staff do anticipate that there will be an increase in chickens that end up at their shelter and for that reason we requested that funds in the existing communities services capital budget be allocated to constructing closures at the animal shelter for hens. The price tag might seem high but the cost reflects constraints at the shelter's site. There's space considerations, there electrical issues and the necessity of keeping hens in separate enclosures for health reasons. There are lower cost options but they would essentially entail putting the chickens in cages in the dog areas which raises some humane issues and would result in them being euthanized. So you're within a matter of days rather than possibly up to a month otherwise. I just want to emphasize that housing stray animals is a widely-accepted purpose of any municipal animal shelter, so the idea of providing facilities for chickens is not really a new fangled idea. It's really just responsible planning for a very real prospect that are seeing a lot more of these animals at the shelter.

JON STEINMAN: Lily Ford, a Policy Analyst with the City of Vancouver's license office. Following that April 2010 presentation to the City Council's Planning and Environment Committee, two Councillors did vocally *oppose* that \$20,000 capital expenditure for a chicken shelter and one Councillor, Suzanne Anton opposed everything. Anton believes that the City is

becoming too involved in urban food production and that food production should be left to the Ministry of Agriculture.

Council Meeting

CHAIR: There are a few questions that I've left to Councillor Deal who has been waiting patiently up in the queue.

COUNCILLOR DEAL: That's quite alright. I'm very pleased to move these recommendations. I was thinking of adding in something about a memo on the advisability fees but perhaps we can revisit that after we've had this is place for a bit to see if that looks like an advisable thing after we've seen how it sort of sorts itself out.

And I want to thank staff and the Food Policy Council and everyone else who's come out today for helping us find a balance of both enabling and ensuring that public health issues and the nuisance issues and the humane treatment of the animal issues are addressed in the reports. I think it's quite thorough. I think it addresses all of those things very well and I would be pleased to move that we send the parts of it that we need to, to public hearing. So with that I would move A through D.

CHAIR: Thank you Councillor Deal. So we have a motion on the floor – Councillor Cadman.

COUNCILLOR CADMAN: I would ask that B3 be separated. I'm prepared to support all the other recommendations. I am not prepared to support the City of Vancouver getting into the business of housing abandoned or seized hens. I just think that that is a Pandora's Box if we open it. It will grow and grow and grow and I can see a flood of people who think it's a good idea to have chickens and then maybe not such a good idea and want to drop them off and have somebody else deal with the problem. I think we've got to be clear from the get-go that that's not going to be our responsibility.

CHAIR: Thank you Councillor Cadman. Councillor Anton.

COUNCILLOR ANTON: Thank you Madam Chair. Well I agree with Councillor Cadman's sentiment which is that the City is taking on way to much responsibility here. There are chickens now and I think the cardinal rule right now is you can have chickens if you don't bother your neighbours. That's a pretty good rule because the only way the Bylaw officer goes and looks at your chickens right now is if they are bothering the neighbours. And I think this is way too complicated, I think it's unnecessarily complicated and it's making the City become the Ministry of Agriculture for chickens. And of all the important things we've got to do in the City, that's not one of them. I think it almost trivializes our role in the world and of all the important things that we have in the City, to take on registration of chickens, I just can't support it. I think the shelter's a waste of money, I think the registry is a waste of money and I think that in fact disallowing people to have chickens so they don't bug their neighbours which is what happens right now, is probably the best way to go. So I'm not going to support any of this motion, Madame Chair.

JON STEINMAN: After that April meeting, a public hearing *was* held in May following which the recommendations were adopted and have since become the City's new Backyard Chicken bylaw.

We've posted a number of links to resources on Vancouver's new bylaw for anyone either living within the City or from other cities throughout North America who are currently, as we are here in the hometown of Deconstructing Dinner living in a City that *prohibits* the raising of backyard chickens. Those links are again on our website at [deconstructingdinner.ca](http://deconstructingdinner.ca) and our July 1<sup>st</sup> 2010 broadcast. You'll also find links to previous episodes of this FARMING IN THE CITY series, many of which include the familiar Bucky Buckaw and his Backyard Chicken broadcast. We heard a segment of Bucky at the top of the hour and we'll help round off today's show with yet another, this one being a useful segment for backyard chickeners but almost equally of use to anyone who eats good quality farm fresh eggs.

Here again, is Bucky Buckaw.

*Bucky Buckaw Broadcast*  
*theme song*

This is Bucky Buckaw with the Backyard Chicken broadcast. I've discussed eggs many times on the Backyard Chicken broadcast. It's amazing that I haven't exhausted the topic, but there really is more to say. Stay with me. Well I'm always quick to remind folks that the Backyard Chickens provide pro bono non-toxic pest and weed control and that their poop is a miraculous transformation of said pests plus garden and kitchen scraps into manure pellets that are perhaps worth their weight in gold as a soil nutrient or compost pile accelerator. And, that their companionship is priceless. Still, there's no doubt the yard fresh egg is the crown jewel of all the rewards reaped from keeping small flocks of chickens. Hens, free-ranging in a decent sized yard in any town in North America with access to sun and shade, water, grass, weeds, bugs, and whatever kitchen scraps or commercial organic feed is necessary to ensure a complete diet will lay eggs that are at least twice as delicious by most reviews and approximately, twice as nutritious according to many studies, as any grocery store egg. Even the grocery store eggs that make claims to organic diets and free-range practices and such. Yet many people, including many chickeners, are so excited by the flavour and nutrition inside an egg that they overlook the tremendous value in the eggshell. It's a case of the wrapper being as useful as the gift. Or the childhood wishes that you can even eat the dishes. Or that old saw, waste not want not.

First of all, hens need to replenish all the calcium they use to lay eggs and one way to ensure that happens is to recycle their own eggshells back into their feed. It's very important to thoroughly crush them to increase calcium absorption. But even more, to avoid creating an association between eggs and feed which as discussed on previous broadcasts, can lead to chickens who eat their own or other hen's eggs before you can get to them. It's important to make sure that this is not the only way your hens get calcium. Be sure to feed them plenty of leafy greens which contain calcium and make sure they have access to sunlight which helps to maintain Vitamin D levels which is necessary for calcium absorption.

You should not be expecting your hens to re-consume the shell equivalent of every egg they lay which is also important because there are so many other uses for the shells. One thing I noticed old-timers doing when I was growing up was throwing eggshells in the blender along with other ingredients for blended drinks. I thought that was pretty strange way back. But I've since learned that eggshells are an excellent way to supplement one's calcium intake because it's a particularly

easy form of calcium to digest and because they contain trace amounts of other minerals. But of course the eggshell must be laid by a hen that is herself absorbing a proper nutrient mix and no undesired extras such as pesticides or antibiotics – in other words, a backyard chicken eggshell.

Half an eggshell a day would be well above the minimum daily requirement of calcium for most humans especially since there is calcium in so many other foods, including as I said, leafy greens. Now if you're eating leafy greens from your own garden, you certainly want to make sure that they are getting enough calcium. All plants should be growing in soil that contains calcium. So eggshells that you're not eating are very beneficial to any pile of compost that will eventually be worked into your vegetable beds. But you may not want to wait for compost. Tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant benefit from being planted in holes seeded with ground eggshells. These crops are susceptible to blossom end rot which is caused by calcium deficiency. This deficiency is usually caused by improper watering but there's no harm in making sure your plants have a steady source of calcium. Some people even plant their 'starts' in unground, half shells. They too will break down as the plant grows. Then you won't have to deal with those annoying little plastic starters. At the same time, crushed eggshells around the perimeter of a plant will deter slugs, snails and cutworms from eating your growing vegetables. The slimier bugs can't risk crawling over jagged materials, like eggshells.

Of course if you're chickening, your pest population should already be low but keep in mind not all chickens are crazy for all bugs. Well I've never seen or heard of a chicken that won't eat an earwig. I could never convince the original Buckaw flock to develop a taste for slugs. On the other hand, a friend had a flock that were simply frenzied over slugs, even over huge, slimy tiger slugs. Maybe even especially for huge, slimy tiger slugs. Gotta tell you it was disgusting to watch even though my sustainable gardening brain approved. Yet that flock wasn't interested in snails. Perhaps they were intimidated by the shells which is a shame because that would be another good source of calcium. At any rate, an extra barrier around your seedlings can't hurt your garden especially since your seedlings should be fenced off from your chickens who might or might not eat slugs or snails but may also, eat your seedlings.

Another trick I learned from the old timers is to add eggshells to brewing coffee beans to improve flavour. This trick was very popular during the Depression when the coffee folks could get their hands on was not always high quality. The calcium compounds in the shells neutralize bitter acids. Now-a-days I happen to like a high quality bean that has a trace of a little bit of bitterness. But sometimes I get a batch of beans that are simply too much. Either way, most people will rave about coffee made with eggshell trick.

Coffee grounds are also excellent for the garden or compost pile because of their nitrogen content. So this use of eggshells is not mutually exclusive with the uses I've already mentioned. I always set aside some shells that are not destined for the garden but will still be quite useful. For instance, if I'm washing the dishes and have trouble getting access to the inside of a thermos or an inconveniently shaped vase or one of those damned stainless steel water bottles I have a love-hate relationship with, I simply shake crushed eggshells and a little soapy water in them to scour them good. It works all right. While I'm at it I can use the eggshells for tough spots on pots and pans. When I'm done, I let the shells sit in my kitchen sink strainer at all times. There, they help

the straining action but most importantly, they naturally clean my pipes as they break down and their minerals seep down the drain.

Finally, eggshells have some health and beauty applications. I've been surprised to learn that a lot of my listeners think I'm some kind of tough guy who doesn't care about my skin care regiment. But on the contrary, I guess you could say I'm a little bit of a dandy. After all, I'm an urban agriculturalist which is not entirely unrelated to metrosexual. And above all, I'm about having a good time which means I want to look as good as I feel. At any rate, here's my two tips for my friends who spend a lot of time with their hands in the dirt and with their face in the wind and need some recovery. First of all dissolve an eggshell in a small jar of apple cider vinegar. Be patient, it's going to take a couple of days. And use the resulting poultice to treat minor skin irritations and itchy skin. Secondly, pulverize dried eggshells with a mortar and pestle, then whisk the powder in with an egg white and use for a healthy, skin tightening facial. Allow the face mask to dry before rinsing it off. You'll look all shiny and swell.

So for looking good and feeling good, for eating good and not wasting nothing, this has been Bucky Buckaw. I had a good time.

### *BB theme song*

Bucky Buckaw's Backyard Chicken broadcast was produced by the Sagebrush Variety Show with the support of Boise Community Radio and Green Institute.

JON STEINMAN: This is Deconstructing Dinner. And that was Bucky Buckaw and his Backyard Chicken broadcast. We're approaching the end of yet another edition of our FARMING IN THE CITY series, and to close out the show today, here is a collage of eggy audio including a classic tune from the late Dean Martin.

### *Fox News Alert jingle and messages*

"These people are planning our destruction."

"The evidence is overwhelming."

"These people are simply demons."

"We're just not smart enough to realize what's going to happen."

SHOW HOST: We're going to my favourite guest to Chicago where right now the City Council is considering, get this, a ban on pet chickens. Now believe it or not, more and more health nuts are keeping them for their organic eggs. That is leading to more and more noise and health complaints because the chickens just run around and scream. So MeMe Roth reports. Meme is the President of Natural Action Against Obesity.

SHOW HOST: Cripes, this is weird.

MEME: I have to say I don't own my own chickens but what do you think is in this?

SHOW HOST: I would guess, question mark.

MEME: Well I think that's what people are concerned about. Nobody knows what's in their food anymore. And what people are doing is they're taking personal responsibility. They're getting their own hens, couple in the backyard and having them lay their own eggs.

SHOW HOST: We're not a third world country. We've got these chickens running around and you know the next door neighbour's saying – Charlie just cool it. I want to go to sleep.

MEME: Well roosters are a problem no matter what your pet is I have to agree the nuisance factor has to be kept to a minimum. But these are people who are concerned about synthetic hormones in the food ...

SHOW HOST: But you can buy this stuff at a store.

MEME: But, not everybody wants to pay the price of organic.

SHOW HOST: So they're raising their chickens at home and you'd be for that?

MEME: I'm not opposed to it. I think if people want to take personal responsibility, this is Fox News, we're all about that.

SHOW HOST: No I'm not about no personal responsibility. Let me ask you this. Do you find it a little weird that, in order to push organic, now we're foisting on people the idea, any way you can eat clean meat good – even if it's ticks the heck out of your neighbours, do it.

MEME: Well I think that we do need to pressure people to take care of themselves. Once you're an adult, go for it. Abuse your body any way you want to but have a bank account to pay the consequences of it. Don't make me pay it in higher health insurance premiums. But we don't have the right ...

SHOW HOST: You mean to tell me, you are one of the smartest women I know, that if you were next door to some guy who had, you know, a third world swat of chickens running around the front yard, and you're just saying – ah, yeah, the chickens look great today, you'd be for it? I'm not debating it. You can eat whatever you want. I'm just saying, just cool it on foisting this stuff on me if I'm your neighbour and now you've got you know a farm going on next to me and I just thought I moved into a community that was going to be quiet.

MEME: Well as long as people are careful of noise ordinances and any health concerns, yes the bird flu ....

SHOW HOST: The chickens are not quiet. Chickens are not quiet.

MEME: Hens are quiet.

SHOW HOST: I worked a summer on a farm, you know they're not quiet.

MEME: This is so disappointing.

SHOW HOST: And by the end of the summer I'd eat them all.

MEME: So you said they were screaming, they were screaming because you were chasing them.

SHOW HOST: They were screaming to get away from me.

*Fox News jingle*

*Egg Ad*

For thousands of years, the world's been fascinated by it. The egg has been used for magic, for rituals, and even for fortune telling. It's been painted, dyed, decorated. It's been a prize gift of kings and commoners alike. Today, it's really hard to find a more popular item on most any menu than the incredible, edible, egg.

There are really quite a few reasons why. First, eggs are extremely nutritious. They're highest quality protein and rich in a number of important vitamins and minerals. Eggs are also easy to prepare and they're available year-round. And last but not least, eggs are extremely versatile. They can be prepared hundreds of different ways for breakfast, lunch and dinner, as well as for snacks. Eggs can be served in more ways than any other food. When prepared properly there's no better looking, better tasting menu item than the incredible, edible egg.

*Dean Martin Musical Ad*

How do you like your eggs in the morning  
I like mine with a kiss  
Boiled or fried  
I'm satisfied as long as I get my kiss.  
How do you like your toast in the morning  
I like mine with a hug  
Dark or light  
The world's all right  
As long as I get my hug.  
I've got to have my love in the a.m.  
Or the rest of my day is positively mayhem  
I'm a regular monster.  
How do you like your eggs in the morning  
I like mine with a kiss  
Up or down'  
I'd never frown, eggs can be almost bliss  
Just as long as I get my kiss.

*ending theme*

JON STEINMAN: And that was this week's edition of Deconstructing Dinner, produced and recorded at Nelson, British Columbia's Kootenay Co-op Radio. I've been your host Jon Steinman. I thank my technical assistant, John Ryan.

The theme music for Deconstructing Dinner is courtesy of Nelson-area resident, Adham Shaikh.

This radio show is provided free of charge to campus/community radio stations across the country and relies on the financial support from you, the listener. Support for the program can be donated through our website at [deconstructingdinner.ca](http://deconstructingdinner.ca) or by dialling 250-352-9600.