



# Secondhand Stories

Non-Profit Bookshop & Farm Microsanctuary

April 24, 2023

Toronto City Council

**Re: Avian Flu Concerns**

Since 2021 the spread of a highly infectious variant (H5N1) of [highly pathogenic avian influenza](#) (HPAI), commonly referred to as “bird flu”, has increased substantially. In Ontario alone, the Canadian Food & Inspection Agency estimates that the number of birds impacted is over [700,000](#). The National Collaborating Center for Environmental Health states that there has been the culling of [7.2 million](#) chickens in Canada because of recent HPAI outbreaks. Over [58.8 million](#) chickens in the United States of America have been killed because of HPAI. Of course, these are just the reported numbers, imagine the tip of an iceberg.

There have also been several confirmed cases of HPAI in wild mammals in Ontario such as [raccoons](#) and [foxes](#). There have been recent cases in other mammals such as [domestic house cats](#) (in France, Netherlands, Iraq, Austria, Germany, Thailand, South Korea, and Indonesia), [otters](#), [sea lions](#), [mink](#), and [bears](#). While luckily Toronto doesn't have many sea lions, it's important to note that the H5N1 strain of HPAI originated in intensive poultry farms in Asia and has since spread around the globe. It's not far off to imagine the devastation that would occur when an owned cat must be euthanized because of the virus. This is the gamble being taken.

The Toronto Wildlife Center has confirmed cases of HPAI and released a [statement](#) that demonstrates the level of investment required to care for positive cases. It is not a matter of if, but when, HPAI will begin to spread from wild birds to backyard hens to wildlife in Toronto.

The argument from supporters that concerns are misplaced and that the majority of cases are linked to industrial operations is untrue. On March 10th this year there was a [non-commercial outbreak](#) in the Municipality of Chatham-Kent. Further to that, last year when there was a commercial case in Clarence Rockland it was only one month before there were four additional cases within a 50km radius in non-commercial flocks.

There have been [two confirmed infected](#) premises of Avian Flu in Southern Ontario. The township of West Lincoln has a commercial case on March 14th and on March 10th the Municipality of Chatham-Kent has a non-commercial case. This is such a high cause for concern that even the [Toronto Zoo](#) is taking steps to remove their birds from outdoor



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spaces. Just earlier this spring, a [companion dog died](#) in Oshawa after being exposed to a goose which was infected with HPAI.

I am not the only one concerned. Public health officials have been warning about HPAI transmission to humans. In February an [11-year-old girl died](#) from HPAI after interacting with her infected backyard chickens. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, head of the World Health Organization, warned that the world had to prepare for a [possible bird-flu pandemic](#) stating, *"H5N1 has spread widely in wild birds and poultry for 25 years but the recent spillover to mammals needs to be monitored closely. We must prepare for any change in the status quo."* Dr. Shayan Sharif, a professor at the University of Guelph and the Associate Dean of the school's Ontario Veterinary College, said there is a concern as it seems the [virus is becoming more adapted to infecting mammals](#). Virologist Tom Peacock echoes these concerns in an article [highlighting the mutations](#) which occurred in the Spanish mink farm outbreak. Professor Ian Brown, Head of Virology for Brittan's Animal and Plant Health Agency, highlights the [scope of the issue](#) saying, *"It is unusual that this particular event is dominated by one particular strain over such a big geographical area. I can't remember any time since 1996 [when H5N1 started], where a single strain has caused so much global spread."* Brian Stevens, a wildlife pathologist for the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative, [links these concerns back to the keeping of backyard chickens](#) expressing, *"This [strain] is actually causing severe illness and death of wild birds in large numbers, which we haven't seen previously. Any time we have a highly pathogenic strain, there is always that concern that it could jump into both commercial or backyard flocks of poultry."*

As we saw with COVID-19 our current healthcare systems are not working well enough or fast enough to manage another potential pandemic. Toronto Public Health is unlikely to be equipped to handle not one but two large-scale crises. Yes, humans rarely get HPAI, but when they do it is usually from coming in direct contact with infected birds. The virus can be transmitted to humans from droppings of infected birds and these droppings can remain [infectious for several days](#). It can even be transmitted via dust. It is not only the participants in this pilot project but neighbors who are inadvertently put at risk.

Currently, no education or training on chicken health or biosecurity is required by backyard chicken owners. Improper small flock biosecurity measures could be disastrous. Biosecurity measures also require the use of N95 masks and gloves. Both of these, if required in larger amounts, could negatively affect access for immunocompromised humans. Biosecurity measures against HPAI require that chickens must be kept indoors, which can be very stressful for chickens, reducing their immunity and putting them even further at risk for contracting contagious diseases.



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Furthermore, the concern in this transmission is not only on the impact on the backyard hens and public health units, but the major impact on commercial food producers. A [Nature.Org](#) article said it best: *“Poultry farms are a key battleground in the fight against H5N1. Outbreaks on farms threaten food security and provide opportunities for the virus to spread to farm workers. For decades, farmers have controlled the disease by culling infected animals. But now, with many countries experiencing outbreaks on dozens of farms every month, this is becoming untenable.”*

In the United States, the [Center for Disease Control](#) recommends preventative measures to protect against HPAI, like avoiding direct contact with birds, either wild or farmed.

Warmly,

**Liz Wheeler**

Secondhand Stories Farmed Animal Microsanctuary Co-Founder  
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**Secondhand Stories**  
Microsanctuary Operations Manual

Last Updated: February 7, 2023



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### About Secondhand Stories

Secondhand Stories is a registered non-profit (780588208RC0001) microsanctuary and online used-book shop.

For the first two years of operations Secondhand Stories sold books and donated over \$25,000 in proceeds to The Sweet Sanctuary. Inspired by them, the property was purchased in July 2022 and shortly thereafter the Farm Microsanctuary was announced on September 16th, 2022.

Our mission is to provide a loving, forever home to abandoned, abused, and neglected farmed animals. Our vision is to offer life-long sanctuary where our rescued farmed animals can: live out their natural lives in peace; be free from exploitation and suffering; and have fulfilled and enriched experiences while living at the sanctuary.

We are located at 21 Pegg Road in Lombardy, ON with 28 acres of safe haven. The Sanctuary is covered under Liz & Craig's home insurance. Policy #: 4001646612 As of January 30, 2023 there are 11 chickens (8 hens and 3 roosters) that call the sanctuary home.

In 2023 Secondhand Stories will be applying for registered charity status as well as certification with the [Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries](#).

### Key Personnel and Activities

Secondhand Stories was founded as a passion project by Liz Wheeler in November 2020. In August 2021 it was incorporated as a registered Canadian non-profit. She is the sole proprietor of the corporation and sole director on the board. Liz's husband, Craig Wheeler has been assisting with operations since the organization's inception.

At the time of the last edit (see first page) there is one volunteer, Marie H., who acts as a volunteer delivery driver for the used bookshop side of our operations. Our [volunteer manual](#) is here. It is our hope to onboard 1-2 volunteers who will help with a monthly deep clean of the coops in the springtime.

### The Open Sanctuary Project's Care Program Evaluation Checklist



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Secondhand Stories has purchased a copy of the Open Sanctuary Project's Care Program Evaluation Checklist and used it while building the two new coops for the chickens in November 2022. It shall be used as a guide to ensure all standards of care are met before rescuing any other species.

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### Best Practices & Procedures

#### Shelter

The chickens' shelters must first and foremost be safe from all predators, protected with ¼ inch hardware cloth. They should offer a dry, temperature-controlled environment that is well-ventilated. The coops should protect against extreme weather, such as wind, rain, and heat and cold. Each chicken shall have no less than 5 square feet of space at any given moment - unless medically necessary - with the intention being to give each chicken the recommended 8 square feet of space. The bedding should be wood shavings (preferably aspen and NOT treated wood, cedar or pine shavings) and have enough to line the floor of the shelter. Nesting boxes should be offered to laying hens, perches should be offered to all residents as well as enrichment opportunities. The shelter should be kept clean at all times - detailed below.

Lombardy, ON can reach temperatures of -30°C in the height of winter. Extra attention was paid during the building of the coops. Floors and doors have been insulated with R10 boards and walls have been insulated with Tyvek wrap, R22 and vapour barrier. The window in each coop is insulated.

On occasion chickens may need to be isolated indoors for their health and safety. There are five rooms in the house which can be used for isolation, however only one is currently set up for long-term residency. Any indoor chickens must be isolated to a room as the resident cats may pose a risk to the chicken(s). Additionally, any room in which a chicken is kept indoors must be free from hazards including but not limited to: unsecured furniture, small ingestible items, breakable decor, toxic plants, and more. When seasons allow for it, the indoor chickens should be given ample outdoor time to display natural foraging and dust bathing activities. During colder temperatures a "man made" dust bath can be offered by filling a low level plastic storage box with black earth and diatomaceous earth.



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### Feeding / Water

Chickens at the sanctuary should have their food and water checked twice daily to ensure there is ample supply at all times. Most of the chickens are fed a mix of Purina Layena crumble and pellets, with the exception of Ellie who is fed exclusively crumble. This diet is fed by many sanctuaries<sup>1</sup> and is a balanced diet including 17% protein. In addition to their food they also receive a mixed salad every day with no more than 10% greens. Most sanctuary residents also receive a serving of scrambled eggs every 3-5 days, with exceptions being made according to veterinary advice. Careful attention is paid to ensure the chickens receive no spoiled food which could cause gastrointestinal upset. Each flock of chickens has a water container which is cleaned and changed daily to prevent the buildup of bacteria.

### Cleaning

Providing a clean living space can help prevent illness, and regular maintenance ensures chickens are cared for. Bedding should be cleaned on a regular basis. The checklists below (daily, weekly, monthly) include steps to ensure their health and wellbeing. Additional consideration of cleaning tasks should be given during peak summer and winter seasons when chickens may not be able to spend time outdoors as the coop is cleaned. Manure Disposal: Bedding and waste must be composted properly to reduce the risk of contamination. Manure from birds that has been treated with antibiotics or other medications should be disposed of away from regular composting piles.

Secondhand Stories utilizes [PREvail](#) disinfectant, which protects against avian influenza.

### Safety

Chickens are a prey species who must be looked after with special consideration of their size. It is critical that chickens are kept in secure enclosures to prevent them from escaping or being attacked by predators. "Lock-Up" procedures are outlined in the daily, weekly and monthly checklists. Caregivers and visitors must also be aware of your surroundings when interacting with chickens. Caution should be used when handling them to avoid injury and attention paid to avoid tripping, stepping on or falling around chickens. The safety of humans should also be taken into consideration. When treating chickens for illness protective gear may be advised.

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<sup>1</sup> [Open Sanctuary - Daily Diet, Treats & Supplements](#)





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### Enrichment

Part of Secondhand Stories' vision is to ensure residents have fulfilled and enriched experiences while living at the sanctuary. Secondhand Stories views enrichment as a necessity for care, not as a bonus. Especially given our climate, chickens may have weeks on end where the bitter temperatures require them to stay indoors. Each day at least one of the following should be provided.

1. Foraging: Chickens are naturally curious and enjoy foraging for food. Chicken treat dispensers can be used to provide mental stimulation for the birds and high-reward treats like mealworms or scratch can be used to encourage a chicken's interest in foraging. Fruit garland can be hung or heads of lettuce from a cage (while under observation to reduce risk of harm). In the fall the chickens may enjoy foraging for treats in a pile of leaves. In the summer produce can be frozen in muffin trays to provide a cooling treat.
2. Toys / Pecking: Chickens enjoy pecking and scratching at objects. Pecking blocks can be used as well as toys such as xylophones.
3. Dust Bath: Dust baths provide chickens the opportunity to keep their feathers clean and healthy.
4. Perching: Chickens need a place to perch at night to sleep, so each chicken should be provided with a perching area in their coops.
5. Visual Enrichment: Studies have shown that chickens are stimulated by visual enrichment, particularly those involving movement. This can be provided in the form of videos playing on an iPad. Some are also known to enjoy looking in the mirror (being mindful that roosters may become confrontational with mirrors). Place a pinwheel outside of their living space.
6. Auditory Enrichment Chickens have been shown to experience reduced fear when classical music is played for them! Other studies have shown that playing a radio for hens made them calmer. Natural sounds for chickens can be soothing, but were not shown to be as helpful as music.
7. Olfactory Enrichment: Chickens have an advanced sense of smell so caution should be used when introducing new smells.

Additional enrichment opportunities include: tall grasses can be planted to provide hiding areas, swings, soccer balls or tennis balls, and/or kiddie pools in the summer (being cautious of redients mobility restrictions).

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### CHECKLISTS

#### Daily Checklist

- SAFETY: Perimeter check for breaches of security.
- SAFETY: Ensure Cozy Coops / electrical cords are in working order & dusted.
- SAFETY: Make sure outdoor space isn't excessively muddy before letting them out.
- SAFETY: Ensure proper ventilation.
- CLEANING: Caked or wet bedding should be removed immediately.
- CLEANING: Perches should have any feces removed.
- CLEANING: Nesting areas must be cleaned daily & eggs should be collected.
- FOOD & WATER: Water sources cleaned and refilled with fresh, clean water.
- FOOD & WATER: Food should be topped up daily and free from bedding.
- HEALTH: Each chicken checked for signs of illness or injury ([checklist](#))
- MISC: Ensure lights are turned off at night to allow rest for sanctuary residents.

#### Weekly Checklist

- CLEANING: Replace all bedding and nesting materials
- HEALTH: Thorough inspection of each chicken for hidden signs of illness or injury including checking under wings for lice.
- HEALTH: Trim beak, nails and spurs as needed.

#### Monthly Checklist

- CLEANING: Disinfect feeders, waterers and all surfaces of indoor space.
- CLEANING: Ensure manure pile is turned.
- HEALTH: Thorough health examination
- SAFETY: Ensure fire detectors and extinguishers are in working order.

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### Veterinary Care / Emergency Services

#### Veterinary Partners

Routine veterinary care is provided by Dr. Erin Preiss from [Hockley Valley Mobile Veterinary Services](#). Emergency / in-clinic services are provided by Dr. Cheryl Osso at [Almonte Veterinary Services](#). In the past veterinary care has been sought by Smiths Falls Veterinary Clinic, which should be avoided as they do not offer many standard



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treatment options (fluids or blood work), however in the case of emergency euthanasia they may be the fastest and most humane option.

Additional options for veterinary partners, if needed, can be found [here](#).

### Monthly Exams

Once per month the sanctuary caregivers shall perform a thorough health examination on each resident. Using the [Open Sanctuary checklist](#) (expanded below) the following should be examined, using a print out of the [health exam form](#) to keep records.

- FEET: Examine for bumps, lumps, swelling, scabs, cuts, pressure sores, or signs of bumblefoot. Pay attention in cold months for red/swollen toe tips, blackened skin or hard black scabby toe tips which can mean frostbite. Check chicken's perching reflex and ensure nails are normal length and even, trimming as needed.
- LEGS: Examine for signs of mites (flaky, crusty or raised scales), scald (ammonia burns), or hock sores. Check their range of motion noting any pain, resistance, heat or swelling. Determine if rooster spurs require trimming/filing.
- VENT: Examine to ensure it is clean and moist (but not wet) and the colour is similar to that to the rest of their body. Ensure there is no discharge, accumulation of fecal matter, crusting or blood. Check for signs of mites, lice, worms. Make sure the vent isn't irritated or prolapsed.
- ABDOMEN: Hens: Foremost use the most gentle touch when examining the abdomen as we do not want to risk breaking any eggs located in the oviduct. When hens are laying their abdomen will become slightly distended. Gently palpate to ensure the abdomen does not feel fluidy. Ensure there is no hardness such as moveable masses or thick structures. Roosters: Examine the abdomen to ensure it is not extended and feels soft (with the exception of the gizzard).
- PREEN GLAND: Examine the preen gland at the base of the chickens tail. Lobes should be small, symmetrical and soft. Check for parasites. Ensure it is not enlarged or impacted.



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- **WINGS:** Examine each individual wing, wings should be held close to their body, and be held as symmetrically as possible. There should be movement in the joint of the wings when they are flexed. Special attention should be paid to any drooping wings, as this can be a sign of a fracture. Examine the wings for any signs of injury, including cuts, scrapes, swelling, or any other injury, while also examining underneath the wing for the lice, mites, and injuries. If the tips of their wings are scabbed or injured, it can be a sign that the wings are being used as support, which can be a sign of mobility issues and are using their wings for support. Mating injuries should not be of concern for sanctuary residents at this time as our resident roosters do not interact with our resident hens. Should this change in the future, an update to this policy will be necessary.
  
- **BREAST & KEEL:** The chicken breast should be examined closely and be blister-free and firm. Different breeds of chickens have different body types, so knowing their individual body traits is important. The keel in chickens who are bred to lay a larger number of eggs will have a keel that is more prominent than in other breeds. You should be able to feel well defined muscle on both sides of their keel. Large breed chickens will have a less prominent keel, and it may be slightly recessed. The keel should not be curved, this can be a sign of nutritional deficiency. Having a misshapen keel is abnormal, but not uncommon in breeds bred for egg production. Examine the keel for any sores.
  
- **CROP:** The chicken's crop can be found to the right of the base of their neck. It should feel empty before they eat or after digestion, and full following a meal. It is imperative to get to know the difference between a full and empty crop, as it will help monitor for any abnormalities. If the crop is hard or filled with fluid, it can indicate a problem, however it can also be perfectly normal. If you suspect any abnormalities but the chicken is not displaying any other concerning behaviours, check the crop frequently throughout the day and if it is flat by morning, it was likely normal. If the crop remains the same, a consultation with a veterinarian would be necessary. Special attention should be given to a chicken whose crop feels filled with fluid as they can easily regurgitate and aspirate. If you notice a bad or sour-smelling breath, this can be an indication of sour crop or yeast infection. If the crop remains full feeling, and you haven't observed them eating recently, it can be a sign of a blockage in their crop. If you find the crop is mostly empty, with the exception of a small clump, this can indicate indigestible materials in the crop, and a veterinarian



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should be consulted. Never attempt to empty a chicken's crop without first consulting a veterinarian.

### □ HEAD & NECK:

Neck: Examine the position of their head, any head tilting should be noted. Their neck should be vertical, with no kinks or lumps.

Comb and Wattles: The comb should not be floppy (though this can be normal in some breeds), and the comb and wattles should not be pale, swollen, grey, or discolored from their normal hue. Look for any scabs, which could be a sign of illness or injury. If you find that the tip of the comb or the bottom of their wattles are discolored (white, pale), swollen, or scabby, this could be a sign of frostbite.

Ears: Examine their ears, they should have clean feathers covering them, they should be free of discharge or debris.

Eyes: The chicken should have open, clean, and alert eyes. They should be clear and free of discharge. Their pupils should be round, about the same size, and react to bright light (get smaller and then return to normal). A misshapen or gray pupil could be a symptom of Marek's disease, and a cloudy eye could be a cataract or the result of an infection. A bulging eye could be caused by glaucoma. A veterinarian should be consulted if you suspect any concerns with a chicken's eyes. Chickens have a third eyelid, it should be cloudy white and retract when stimulated. Should it appear red, swollen, or non-retractable, this can be a sign of illness.

Sinuses: Examine the area around the eyes and in front of the eyes for any swelling, this can be a sign of illness.

Beak: Examine their beak, it should be smooth and free from cracks. The upper beak should be examined to ensure it is not growing much longer than their lower beak as this can interfere with eating, pecking, and preening. A rotary tool can be used to file away any breaks or cracks. Larger cracks, or significant damage should warrant a veterinary consult. The upper and lower beak should be aligned, if they go in different directions, it may be a common congenital issue known as cross beak. Chickens with cross beak may need to be offered softer foods as dry pellets and crumble might be difficult to eat. Chickens with cross beak should be examined



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closely as they often need their beaks trimmed regularly. If the beak changes, and is suddenly different, a veterinarian should be consulted.

**Nares:** Examine the chicken's nares (the pair of openings of the nose), these should be free of any discharge or crustiness. If the nares appear clogged, a moistened cotton swab or a pair of tweezers can be used to remove any obstructions. A chicken's breathing should not be loud, labored, wheezy, rattly, whistling, or squeaky. Any signs of abnormal breathing should be addressed immediately and veterinarian consulted.

□ **MOUTH:** Examine their mouth, it should not be tacky or have excessive mucus, this can be a sign of dehydration. Their mouth should be free of lesions, ulcers, lumps, or areas of discoloration. Raised yellow lesions could be a sign of wet pox, squamous cell carcinoma, or another disease. The upper mandible should have a split in it, this should be free of obstruction and discharge. Examine the back of the throat, you should be able to see their trachea. If there are concerns, a flashlight can be used by holding the light against the chicken's neck while looking down their throat as the light will illuminate the trachea. Look for signs of obstruction, gapeworms, and lesions.

□ **FEATHERS & SKIN:** Examine the chicken's feathers, they should appear shiny and lay flat against their bodies (with the exception of fluffy breeds). Feathers should be bright and clean, with no signs of blood. There should be no missing, tattered, frayed, ruffled, or broken feathers, with the exception of chickens who are going through a molt. Any issues can be the result of stress, parasites, behavioural issues between flock mates, nutrition deficiencies, or infestation of their habitat. If the feathers do not fold into their normal positions, this can also indicate a problem. Special consideration should be made when handling a chicken who is going through a molt, as pin feathers (emerging feathers) are sensitive and can be damaged easily. Feathers can hide illness and injuries, it is imperative to take the time to check and feel the areas of the body.

□ **WEIGHT & BODY CONDITION:** It is important to keep accurate weight for each individual, as a healthy adult chicken should maintain their weight consistently. If the chicken has lost a lot of weight, this could indicate an illness, malnutrition, or parasites like coccidiosis. If the chicken has gained a lot of weight, it is crucial to ensure that the chickens diet is consistent and healthy, and special attention should



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be given to overfeeding, especially with treats and snacks. Obesity in chickens can increase their risk of developing health challenges, mobility issues, pressure sores, and heart issues. The use of a dynamic weighing scale will be helpful to ensure accurate weight checks. Chickens should be weighed in a standing or sitting position, and never on their backs. While examining their body, look for signs of discoloration, scabbing, swelling, or any signs of injury, while also looking for any signs of external parasites. Their skin should be soft, pale pink, and translucent (with the exception of some naturally darker breeds). Also keep in mind that in large breed chickens, the area along the keel and on the abdomen is often thicker and redder than the rest of their skin, this is normal.

□ POOP: Examine fecal matter daily, and make note of whether or not the stool looks abnormal or concerning. Not every unusual dropping is of concern; however, a veterinarian should be consulted in the event that there is blood in the stool, worms in the stool, consistently foamy, loose, or abnormally coloured stool that cannot be explained by diet, or if you notice loose or watery stool from a resident who also appears unwell. When in doubt, grab a fecal sample and consult with a veterinarian.

In the event that there is cause for medical concern with one of the residents, steps should be taken to consult with a veterinarian immediately and isolate the individual.

### Medical Emergency Protocol

In the event of a medical emergency the following steps should be taken:

1. Assess the situation: Determine the nature of the emergency. If the emergency is severe and needs immediate attention, call Smiths Falls Veterinary clinic (the closest hospital) immediately. If the emergency can survive one hour, contact Almonte Veterinary Services immediately and begin transport.
2. Administer first aid: If the situation warrants, we will administer first aid to the affected chicken according to our training and the severity of the injuries.
3. Isolate the affected individual or animal: The affected chicken will be isolated in the house's main bathroom to prevent further harm until a direction is chosen.
4. Document the incident: We will document the incident including the time, location, and any actions taken, in a clear and concise manner.

### Medicine Cabinet



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The following medication and supplies are on hand at all times to ensure no delay in treatment:

Name & Amount	Purpose	Expiry
Ectiban - 15ml	Lice and mite spray.	01/2025
Panacur Aquasol - 15ml	Dewormer water additive with no withdrawal time	None
Amprol - 300ml	Coccidiostat with no withdrawal time	05/2026
Onycin 1000 - 75g	Antibiotic powder	None
Metacam - 30ml	NSAID pain medication for use if any wounds, limping, or other painful conditions	
Vetericyn VF Dermal Care Spray - 90ml	An antimicrobial spray/ wound flush that I have used on things as small as wounds to bumblefoot, or as big as a dog bite injury	08/2023
Tobrex 0.3% eye drops	Good eye drop if any injuries, discharge, or squinting	12/2024
Bene Bac	Probiotic for use with sour crop or after antibiotic use	None
Critical Care Herbivore - 70g x 2	A herbivore diet supplement in powdered banana and apple form – can mix with water for if appetite is poor	12/2023
Electrolytes - Hydro Hen 226g	Electrolyte additive for water for sick animals or when they are a little off	None
Saline and iodine	Safe wound flush and cleaner	None
Bandaging supplies	Poodle noodle for bumblefoot bandaging, Telfa non adherent pads, gauze squares, cling wrap, vet wrap and tongue depressors	None

### Spay & Neuter Policy

Generally, it is not recommended for Chickens to be spayed or neutered. At Secondhand Stories our roosters and hens are kept separate to reduce the risk of injury to our hens from aggressive mating and fertilized eggs / unplanned chicks.

Suprelorin implants: A Suprelorin implant is a small device that is inserted under the skin and releases the hormone over a period of time. In chickens, Suprelorin implants are used to control egg production. Suprelorin implants are generally considered safe and effective, but they should only be used under the guidance of a veterinarian.





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In Canada, these implants are hard to obtain, extremely costly (December 2022 quoted at \$900), and are generally only effective for up to 6 months. At this time the sanctuary has opted to only seek an implant if strongly recommended by the veterinary partners. For more information on Suprelorin implants [read here](#).

### **Euthanasia Policy**

*"It can be very difficult to identify and assess pain in birds as they are a prey animal and hide signs of pain and discomfort so they can appear healthy to avoid predation. Often for owners, they hide signs of sickness until diseases are advanced or prognosis is poor."*

**- Dr. Erin Preiss**

1. Only use euthanasia as a last resort: Euthanasia should only be considered as a last resort when all other options have been exhausted and the animal is suffering from a terminal or untreatable condition. The [quality of life](#) scale can be used to help assess this decision.
2. Consult with a veterinarian: Consult with a veterinarian experienced in avian medicine to determine the most humane method of euthanasia and ensure that it is performed correctly.
3. Decision: The decision to euthanize one of the sanctuary residents will be made solely by the founder, Liz Wheeler, with agreement from a veterinarian who has evaluated and signed off on the decision that euthanasia is the most compassionate course of action for that animal.
4. Process: Euthanasia should always be carried out by a licensed veterinarian, in an area separate from the other chickens.
5. Document the process: Document the euthanasia process, including the reason for euthanasia and the method used, in a clear and concise manner.

Post Euthanasia: All residents shall be cremated and returned to the home of caregivers Liz and Craig Wheeler, unless a post-mortem / necropsy has been recommended by the veterinarian.

If an animal passes away from unidentifiable causes the body shall be sent for a post-mortem /necropsy to ensure the safety of the remaining residents.

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### **Zoonotic Disease Prevention & Management Policy**



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Zoonotic diseases are those which can transfer from animals to humans. Some common zoonotic diseases include:

- **Salmonella:** Chickens can carry Salmonella bacteria, which can cause food poisoning in humans.
- **Avian influenza:** Chickens can be infected with avian influenza, also known as bird flu, which can be transmitted to humans through contact with infected birds or their secretions.
- **Campylobacteriosis:** Chickens can carry the bacteria Campylobacter, which can cause an infection called campylobacteriosis in humans.
- **Listeriosis:** Chickens can carry the bacteria Listeria, which can cause an infection called listeriosis in humans.
- **Toxoplasmosis:** Chickens can be infected with the parasite Toxoplasma gondii, which can cause toxoplasmosis in humans.

It is important to practice proper hygiene and follow biosecurity measures to reduce the risk of zoonotic diseases:

- **Wash hands thoroughly:** Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling chickens or their manure.
- **Wear protective clothing:** Wear protective clothing, such as gloves and apron, when handling chickens or their manure to reduce the risk of contact with infectious agents.
- **Cleaning tools:** Have designated cleaning tools for each bird resident space and store so as to prevent contamination
- **Shelter:** Keeping residents in enclosed spaces with solid roofs and sides covered with window screens or mesh/netting that prevent wild birds and rodents from entering the space.
- **Outdoor space:** Address drainage issues, and do not allow residents in outdoor spaces affected by run-off, which could be a source of contamination.
- **Keep sick chickens separated:** Keep sick chickens separate from healthy ones to prevent the spread of disease.
- **Dispose of manure properly:** Dispose of manure properly, such as through composting, to reduce the risk of contamination.
- **Avoid contact with wild birds:** Avoid contact with wild birds, as they may carry diseases that can be transmitted to domestic chickens and humans.



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Consideration for reducing zoonotic transmission has been included in our daily, weekly and monthly checklists. In the unfortunate event that a zoonotic disease has been identified the following steps should be taken:

- No general access / outside visitors shall be allowed on the sanctuary grounds.
- While no one other than Craig and Liz should have access to sanctuary grounds, signage will be displayed advising of the risk of avian flu.
- Begin use of shoe covers or properly maintained footbaths, wearing disposable gloves and, when applicable, protective coverings such as Tyvek suits.
- Maintain daily record keeping including a DAILY log of personnel in contact with bird residents, cleaning logs, and resident records.

### Avian Flu

Chickens can be infected with avian influenza, also known as bird flu, which can be transmitted through contact with infected birds or their secretions (aerosol droplets or contaminated fomites). It is highly contagious between birds, though uncommon to humans. At the time of writing this manual (January 2023) there are still reported cases of positive avian flu in Ontario.

Signs of Avian Flu include:

Neurological symptoms such as head and neck tremors; Inability to stand; Unusual positioning of the head or extremities (such as arching the head backwards or twisting the neck); Loss of appetite; Listlessness; Sudden drop in egg laying in actively laying hens; Cyanosis (bluish discoloration of the skin) and edema of the head, comb, wattle, and snood; Necrosis and hemorrhage of non-feathered skin; Blood-tinged discharge from eyes and nares; Sneezing, coughing, abnormal breathing sounds; Green diarrhea; Sudden death.

Steps to reduce transmission include:

- Exclude wildlife from residents' living spaces
- Protect residents' food and water
- Store food, bedding, rolls and supplies so that wildlife cannot access them
- Limit humane access and movement on property to reduce risk
- Implement and enforce heightened cleaning and hygiene practices



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### Welcoming New Residents

#### **Capacity for Responsible Care Policy**

When establishing the Farm Microsanctuary the term Microsanctuary was picked with careful consideration.

*“Microsanctuaries aren’t to be seen as stepping stones to larger sanctuaries but ends unto themselves: providing the best care to microsanctuary residents is a worthy goal, and the pressure to get bigger should always come second to sustainability and some degree of self-reliance.” - [Microsanctuary Resource Center](#)*

#### Spatial Considerations.

Secondhand Stories has two winterized coops. Each measures 54 sq ft and one of the coops also has a separated 18 sq ft loft. At most each coop can house 10 chickens, however our intention is never to exceed 7, allowing for the ideal 8 sq ft per bird. In emergency situations there are 50 spaces within the home that can be used for isolation, however only 2 should be considered for long-term housing. Lastly, there are two un-insulated structures on the property which, with repair, may be able to be utilized for additional residents.

#### Behavioural Considerations:

Additional considerations include noting each chicken’s behaviour and social hierarchy. For instance, one coop is presently being used as a bachelor flock, with the loft being used for our blind Rooster, Ellie. Another rooster may not integrate well.

#### Personnel Considerations:

Liz and Craig both work full-time jobs. While Liz works from home and has a workplace understanding of flex time for the residents, it is important to note that she cannot tend to the residents 24/7. Before taking any new species training should be taken to ensure proper care and standards are met.

#### Financial Considerations:

Secondhand Stories is funded in small part by the non-profit bookshop, however most of the funding is provided personally by Liz & Craig Wheeler. Whenever considering capacity, a sanctuary must take an honest look at their funding, both current and projected, and always weigh the financial resources that they’ve already



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committed to existing residents versus the cost of taking in new residents, especially if the potential new residents have immediate healthcare needs. Ideally, there should be contingency funds allocated for the unfortunate event that residents need emergency care.<sup>2</sup>

### Regulatory Capacity

Secondhand Stories sanctuary grounds are zoned as “farm” and therefore there is not a legal restriction on the number of chickens we are able to rescue.

### **Rescue Policy**

Our mission is to provide a loving, forever home to abandoned, abused, and neglected farmed animals. It is our goal to accept additional species including turkeys, pigs and/or goats in future years.

When all-due considerations have been made in respect to Secondhand Stories capacity for care, new rescues may be accepted into the microsanctuary family. Each rescue is intended to be a life-long resident and thus the health and welfare of the residents should be the top priority at all times.

It is Secondhand Stories policy to never pay to rescue an animal in need (unless an adoption fee from a reputable animal protection organization) as we believe it incentivizes animal exploitation and funds its continuance.

The following types of rescues will be accepted: surrendered animals, abandoned animals with an unknown history.

### **Surrender Form**

In the event that the decision has been made to accept a surrendered chicken, or chickens a surrender form must be signed and completed by the former owner. A PDF of Secondhand Stories surrender form can be found [here](#).

### **Intake Process**

1. Upon receiving the chickens, assess their condition and determine any immediate medical needs. Provide first aid as needed and document the chickens' condition and any actions taken.

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<sup>2</sup> [Open Sanctuary - Determining Your Animal Sanctuary's Capacity for Responsible Care](#)



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2. Quarantine: Place the chickens in quarantine for 30 days<sup>3</sup> to prevent the spread of any illnesses or diseases to other birds at the rescue.
  3. Health assessment: Conduct a primary health assessment of the chicken(s) on the day of arrival and schedule a veterinary examination at the soonest possible time being sure to follow veterinary recommendations of testing for diseases, and any necessary treatments.
  4. Record-keeping: Create a file for each chicken and record all relevant information, including the chicken's condition, medical history, and any treatments provided.
  5. Integration: Once the chickens are deemed healthy, integrate them into the rescue's flock.
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### Disaster & Emergency Plan & Procedures

In the event of a disaster or emergency the first caregiver on site shall become the lead in ensuring the plan is followed through. If neither caregiver is home, the emergency service provider shall be directed to the folder on the front deck of the home which includes:

- A map with a listing of all emergency supplies
- A list of emergency contacts
- Detailed plans for each emergency situation

#### Natural Disaster Plan

Lombardy had not historically experienced earthquakes or tornados, however wind and ice storms are not uncommon. The biggest risk of a natural disaster would be falling tree limbs or projectile objects. Before two of the new coops were built, an arborist was consulted to ensure all trees are currently healthy and at low-risk of falling. The one tree of concern was a century-old maple tree, and half was cut down.

#### Power Cut Off:

Should there be a risk of water damage to the electric, the first step taken should be to use the breaker located in the house basement to turn off the power supply.

#### Evacuation:

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<sup>3</sup> <https://opensanctuary.org/establishing-a-safe-and-effective-quarantine-policy/>



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Should one or both coop(s) become impacted in a way that renders it inhabitable, cat carriers (located in the garage or red shed) will be used to transport the chickens into the house in one or multiple of the designated shelter rooms (main bathroom, master bathroom, office and basement bedroom).

### Temporary Housing:

Should the house also be uninhabitable, chickens will be immediately placed in cat carriers and outreach will begin to fellow local sanctuaries and boarding facilities to find temporary shelter. The owners' vehicle will be used to transport animals to their temporary shelter and if owned car transportation is not available Rideau Lakes Taxi service can be contacted at 613-929-6501.

An emergency kit list has been created detailing essential supplies that should be collected:

- 6 x 4L Water Jugs (located in mudroom)
- 1 x Bag of Purina Layena Pellets (located in garage)
- First aid supplies (located in coffee bar lower cabinet)
- Medications (located in coffee bar lower cabinet)

### Fire Escape Plan

Note: The founders have completed [FireSmart101](#) wildfire safety training.

The closest fire extinguisher is located in the mudroom of the house (*see map above*).

### Evacuation:

In the event a fire is noticed in the surrounding area, but not affecting the coops itself, quick action can be taken to evacuate the chickens using cat carriers (located in the garage or red shed) to transport the chickens into the house in one or multiple of the designated shelter rooms (main bathroom, master bathroom, office and basement bedroom).

However, in the life-threatening event that the fire might be located at the coops, the doors of the coop will be propped open to allow for escape of the chickens and 9-1-1 will be called immediately. Corraling the chickens should come secondary to ensuring they are not trapped.



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The township of Rideau Lakes confirmed their “emergency management plan accounts for persons and property protection”, does not include animals and they “don’t have agricultural plans for temporary housing” of farmed animals. Essentially, evacuation of our animals remains our responsibility alone.

There are no fire hydrants available and the closest fire station is located in Smiths Falls, over 20km away. There is a tap/hose at the back of the house with water access and a fire extinguisher in the mudroom (*see map above*).

A head count of chickens should be completed once both doors have been opened and emergency services have been called to confirm everyone made it out safely.

### Power Outage Plan

**The sanctuary is currently undergoing electric updates to install a power-backup generator that will ensure both coops have electric (and therefore heat/air conditioning) at all times, even if power outage occurs.**

The sanctuary grounds are located on a well water system which is powered by an electric pump. While the pump is supplied by the generator, hot water is not. The home is equipped with a kettle to warm water as needed.

### Escaped Residents Plan

Twice a day a chicken count is completed. As soon as signs of a missing chicken occur the immediate area should be searched. If the chicken cannot be located within 5 minutes text messages should be sent to the three neighbors surrounding the property inquiring if they have seen the chicken(s). If there is no success in the first two steps, a post can be made in the Rideau Lakes Community forum on Facebook. As a last step we will contact Mary Sue at Rideau Lakes’ local animal control at 1-800-928-2250 Ext. 293 to see if any reports have been filed about a wandering chicken.

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## Responsible Visitors Policy

Secondhand Stories is a sanctuary first and foremost and any operations should be limited to what is in the best interest of the residents. All visitors must abide to the following rules:





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1. Respect the residents: Visitors should respect the residents and their space, and should not approach, touch, or feed the residents without permission from sanctuary staff.
2. Follow instructions from staff: Visitors should follow instructions from sanctuary staff at all times and should not enter areas that are off-limits.
3. Leave the sanctuary as you found it: Visitors should leave the sanctuary as they found it and should not litter or cause damage to the property.
4. Respect the privacy of the sanctuary and its residents: Visitors should respect the privacy of the sanctuary and its residents and should not take photos or videos of the residents or the property without permission from sanctuary staff.
5. Supervise children: Children are not permitted to enter residents' enclosures, however are welcome on the microsanctuary grounds. Visitors with children should supervise their children at all times.
6. Other Animals: Pets / dogs are not permitted on the microsanctuary grounds.

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## Ethics

### Veganism

Secondhand Stories identifies as a vegan farm microsanctuary. No animal products are consumed on the microsanctuary grounds, with the exception of food required by microsanctuary residents. We have signed the [PEACE Vegan Sanctuary Pledge](#). Secondhand Stories will seek to educate the public about the importance of animal welfare, the role of the sanctuary in rescuing and caring for chickens, and encourage veganism wherever possible.

### Code of Conduct

This section will be updated at the election of a board once Secondhand Stories has received charitable status.

### Anti-Discrimination, Inclusion & Diversity Policy

Secondhand Stories recognizes the overlap between social justice issues and animal rescue work. We the caregivers, as persons of privilege, seek to be allies by actively working to dismantle oppressive systems that negatively impact marginalized



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groups. We are dedicated to fostering a safe and welcoming environment on our online platforms and at our sanctuary grounds. This will be done by:

- Calling out any acts discrimination;
- Ensuring accessibility for supporters on social media through the use of captions;
- If hosting any future market events we will strive to ensure that members of the BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ makeup at least 50% of tabling organizations / businesses;
- Donating any quality unsold books to BIPOC/LGBTQIA grassroots organizations

We recognize that we (the owners) are responsible for ensuring that we continue our education on ways that we can support and uplift marginalized communities.

*A list of readings that have informed this policy can be found in the resource section below.*

### **Non-Harassment & Anti-Violence Policy**

All forms of harassment and violence, including physical, verbal, and sexual harassment, and threats or acts of violence are prohibited on microsanctuary grounds and online spaces which the microsanctuary operates.

### **Whistleblower Policy**

It is important for a farm sanctuary to establish a whistleblower policy to protect the residents of the sanctuary. Having a whistleblower policy in place can help to ensure that incidents of misconduct are promptly and properly addressed. Reports may include, but are not limited to: reporting illegal or unethical conduct, reporting violations of policies or procedures, reporting harm to the public or reporting harm to the organization. Volunteers, visitors or members of the public are encouraged to report concerns.

Concerns of any matter are welcome to be made directly to the founder, Liz Wheeler, at [liz@secondhandstories.ca](mailto:liz@secondhandstories.ca). Concerns will be investigated and responded to in a timely and thorough manner.



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Animal Welfare Concerns can be made anonymously to the Provincial Animal Welfare Services act hotline at 1-833-926-4625. Concerns about business operations can be made anonymously to [CRA](#) or the [Charities Directorate](#).

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### Contingency & Succession Planning

In 2023 Secondhand Stories will be developing a financial plan that outlines how funds are raised and allocated, including provisions for emergency fundraising and long-term sustainability.

#### Moving

The microsanctuary operates on land owned by the caregivers. Should the caregivers default on their mortgage and be forced to move, every effort will be made to seek new residence in a location which the animals can be safely relocated to. A list of potential temporary facilities can be found in the g-drive.

#### Death or Severe Impairment

Should either Liz or Craig suffer severe impairment or death the able-bodied / surviving individual shall accept responsibility to continue the operations of the microsanctuary.

Should *both* Liz and Craig Wheeler be survived by sanctuary residents, the executor of their will shall ensure all residents are taken care of in the interim of being rehomed.

*Note: Please see the [Disaster & Emergency Plan & Procedures](#) for contingency plans specific to natural disasters, fire, flood or power outages.*

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### Resources

#### General Resources

- [P.E.A.C.E Canada](#)
- [Farm Sanctuary - Sanctuary Based Research](#)
- [Open Sanctuary](#)



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- [Microsanctuary Resource Project](#)

### Emergency Resources

- [Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction](#)
- [FireSmart Canada](#)

### Medical Resources

- [Pain Scale & Quality of Life Assessment for Chickens](#)
- [BSAVA Manual of Backyard Poultry Medicine & Surgery](#)
- [The Chicken Health Handbook](#)
- [Manual of Poultry Diseases](#)
- [The chicken model of spontaneous ovarian cancer](#)
  - *"Of chickens studied, in some cases over a third of a population spontaneously developed ovarian cancer*
  - *without anything done medically to induce this.*
- [Reproductive Diseases in Birds](#)
- [Physical Exam for Chickens](#)

### Anti-Discrimination, Inclusion & Diversity Resources

- [Veganismofcolour.com](#)
- [The Vegan Bill of Consistent Anti-Oppression](#)
- [Encompass Essays](#)
- [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Animal Rights](#)



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**April 24, 2022**

Toronto City Council  
Re: UrbanHensTO

Dear Council / Committee Members -

I have submitted a separate document outlining my concerns about avian flu. This letter will address my concerns that this pilot program, as currently set up, poses a significant risk to the welfare and lives of the chickens who are part of this pilot because of the lack of public education on proper and humane care of chickens.

Owning chickens is not as easy as one might think. Our sanctuary has a 25 page document that outlines our operations. Everything from shelter, feeding, cleaning, safety, veterinary care, intake process, euthanasia policies to emergency planning is included. We currently have 9 rescue chickens, but have had up to 13 at one time. We have spent \$30,000 on their care in nine months. Our chickens average an expense of \$2300 per bird. I have taken our costs and broken them down so you can see how these costs add up:

Item	Explanation
Shelter	Coop with 5sq/ft per bird, hardware cloth (for predator protection), locks (for predator protection - handles are not enough), aspen shavings, nesting boxes, perches, cozy coop heating during winter / fans during summer (for temperature control), roofed run (to prevent wild bird droppings from entering), cleaning supplies & products. If no access to dirt, a litter box with earth for dust bathing. These costs can vary. To get set up we have spent \$15,000 on sheltering.
Food	Water and food dishes. Balanced diet (with CFIA recommended values of protein and calcium) is \$26/bag. Scratch, while cheaper, will not provide the nutrition needed. Oyster shells/grit (to help chickens digest food and increase lost calcium from laying eggs) is \$20/bag.
Biosecurity	Cleaning supplies and products including: shovel for mucking, disposable gloves and mask, avian-flu preventative cleaning solution (\$60). Rodent proof container for feed and a second container for proper feces disposal.
Veterinary Care	Routine veterinary exam (\$200) per chicken, emergency medical examinations for stuck eggs which are very common (\$250 x 4), medication for parasite control (\$300), euthanasia with cremation (\$800).
Enrichment	Especially given our climate, chickens may have weeks on end where the bitter temperatures require them to stay indoors. Each day at least one of the following should be provided: salad or treats for foraging; toys.



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Without proper inspection and enforcement the city is leaving animals vulnerable to neglect and cruelty. This is especially dire when there is a serious lack of veterinary care. The city cannot afford to police this program and it cannot afford an avian flu outbreak by not investing to monitor the program effectively.

You will hear arguments against shutting down the pilot on the basis that it is community building and it helps address food insecurity. The average cost of setting up a compliant chicken coop in the city is over \$1,000 and 97% of households participating have an income higher than \$100,000. Further, I fail to see the community aspect when elderly and immunocompromised community members are put at risk.

I'd also like to inquire about the major gaps in regulations and contingency planning which is ultimately what causes chickens to be abandoned or surrendered.

- What regulations would exist to stop the breeding of hens?
- What regulations would exist when participants in the program are breeding for slaughter?
- How are chicken deaths being tracked? Is testing completed to ensure death is not attributed to avian flu?
- Are inspections done to premises like "Rent a Chicken" to ensure animal health and welfare?
- Does the city have the funds to preemptively ensure violations are identified and that Chickens are not kept in negligent or abusive situations?

In closing I ask you to consider the weight of these questions, which as the program stands, remain unanswered: **Who does this program benefit and does the benefit outweigh the risk to public safety and an animal's right to live without suffering.**

The city simply does not have the budget to launch a shelter program for farmed animals, which is what would be required if you are to encourage farm animals being kept in urban limits.

Warmly,

Liz Wheeler

Secondhand Stories Farmed Animal Microsanctuary Co-Founder

[liz@secondhandstories.ca](mailto:liz@secondhandstories.ca)