

PermacultureinPractice

Chickens can be pets and much more

We've kept chickens in the Santa Fe city limits for 15 years. For about half of this time, we kept them on an eighth of an acre surrounded by others' walls and windows. Right now, our coop is an egg's throw from two or three neighboring homes. We've never received a complaint.

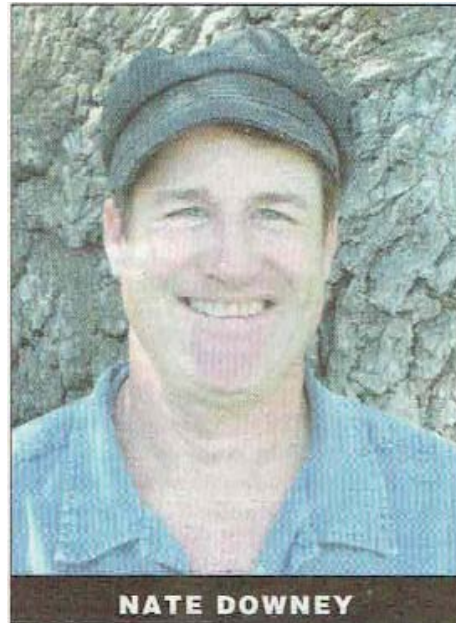
Many of our friends also have chickens, and the only time we've heard of any "nuisance" it was rooster-oriented. (Biological note: Roosters are NOT required to get dependably delicious eggs. Roosters are only needed if you want your eggs to hatch into birds. This means most chicken owners do not own roosters.) Quite the opposite from being called a nuisance, we all enjoy sharing eggs with our community, and the non-chicken-owning always seem to enjoy them.

Our feathered friends provide healthy food, free fun, fascinating beauty, great soil, and a sense of purpose in life.

Sometimes I wonder, How many Frosted Flakes have my kids NOT eaten thanks to our hens? Sure, our boys love sweetened cereal, sugary muffins, and waffles with syrup in the morning, but they also love eggs: scrambled, fried, soft-boiled, or omelet-style with cheese -- wrapped up in the form of a quintessential (and totally traditional) breakfast burrito. For lunch, it's egg salad. For snack, the only thing between my kids and some piece of junk food sometimes is a hard-boiled egg.

My heart goes out to folks in Eldorado who are being told by a small group of busybodies that they can't eat and share this kind of convenient, fresh, and hormone-free food. In this country, one would hope that having the freedom to choose a vastly better life would be not be prohibited by nervous ninnies.

I also feel sorry for Eldorado's gardeners. Unlike the dog doo and cat scat that pollute our state's waterways, poultry poo is wonderful for building healthy soil. From my 20 years as a landscaper in this town, I know that Eldorado, of all places, would benefit from better soils.



What's with this anti-chicken contingent? It's clearly misinformed and behind the times. The more it barks and bites, the sillier the whole situation seems because the anti-chicken minority only help to bring the facts to the fore and more people quickly learn how great it is to have chickens as pets. Like other pets, chickens happen to be extremely beautiful and interesting to watch. They are also a gas to train, feed, and hold.

In a worst-case scenario, the uptight tendencies of some residents could end up costing Eldorado dearly in legal bills. This kind of public fight would probably not be good for property values, and it certainly would not be good for the human values associated with maintaining a sense of purpose in life. Chickens help support these values because they represent a real way for people to take a little bit more responsibility for their lives on this finite planet with its increasingly limited resources.

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