

# Losers win fowl war

At the peak of this election season, it's encouraging to remember that no matter who counts the ballots in Ohio, we here in Santa Fe are blessed with the results of a vote as profound as any could ever be. I refer, of course, to the battle for Eldorado's soul.

Last month a slim majority of Eldorado residents said it did not want chickens (other than packaged ones) to exist within the boundaries of its fabled utopia. Fortunately, this narrow margin was not enough to win the day. Pro-chicken forces, even though they lost by a small percentage, no longer have to live like the folks who hid Anne Frank. You see, the anti-chicken flock needed to get a majority of landowners, not merely voters, to the polls.

Thanks to the 1,000 people who chose not to vote, Eldorado's bylaws will remain sloppily written and completely unchanged. Here's why the outcome of Eldorado's Fowl War is so wonderful: fresh

eggs have the best flavor on Earth, and they deliver a nutritious breakfast-alternative in an age of boxed waffles. Chickens provide local food security and add nutrients to our increasingly degraded soils. Most breeds are good weed-eaters and are easy to care for. Studying fowl habits and habitats is a cost-effective way to teach biology, chemistry, and physics to children of all ages, and chicken husbandry has become a fashionable hobby. (Did I mention that climate change is real, food prices will be going up, and our ability to create a sustainable society is critical to ensure a future for our species?) Finally, let's not forget that sometimes birds really are pets.

Other times they're pests. A neighbor recently complained about my boisterous flock, and as it turned out, the best thing to do was to chop the head off one of them. (The chickens, not the neighbors, silly!) Last year, at the beginning of winter some coyotes got into our coop and left

one lonely bird behind. I bought four almost full-grown ladies to keep Blacky company, but after a winter of détente, spring came and the flock got increasingly noisy. I mean awful, loud-mouthed, and outright rowdy. The din was insane, and my neighbors were right to complain.

And I was right to choose ole Blacky. For who would want a lonely, pissed-off hen who'd grown ornery and shrill? Perhaps I should have found her a home. Maybe I could have taken her up to the headwaters of Apache Creek and let her run free for about an hour until something got her.

But it seemed like the right thing to do, so I sharpened my ax and said a long, thoughtful prayer. Then, she was gone — flopping around, headless and dumb: I soon found myself dunking her warm body into a tin bin of hot water. That's how you make it easy to pull off the feathers. Heated and wet, they slide right off. Then, stripped bare, you gut it, clean it,



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and start making your soup.

Know this, Eldorado, chicken owners sometimes must be brave.

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