

July 8, 2014

Dear Administrator:

**Re: Chickens at Long-term Care and Retirement Homes**

Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH) has recently received calls from long-term care (LTC) and retirement homes (RH) expressing an interest in having chickens onsite as a resident activity and to use any eggs produced in food preparation. WDGPH has concerns with introducing this activity into a LTC or Retirement Home. As with all animal interactions, there is a risk of transmission of an infectious disease that may outweigh the social benefit. Residents would be at risk of contracting poultry-associated infections, most commonly salmonellosis or campylobacteriosis, both gastrointestinal illnesses that are more severe in the elderly. The influenza virus has also been isolated from poultry. Live birds can appear healthy while carrying bacteria that can make people ill. Residents could be exposed to disease through direct contact with the poultry, waste handling, egg handling and through egg consumption. It must also be noted that any eggs produced cannot be used by the home, as ungraded eggs cannot be used in a food premise or distributed by the premises.

Food services in long-term care and retirement homes are inspected under the jurisdiction of the *Health Promotion and Protection Act, Ontario Regulation 562 – Food Premises* ([http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws\\_regs\\_900562\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_900562_e.htm)), which states that all food prepared, handled, served, stored, etc. onsite is required to be both graded by and purchased from an approved source:

**EGGS**

**54.** (1) *No operator of a food premise shall store, handle, serve, process, prepare, display, Distribute, transport, offer for sale or sell ungraded or Grade “C” eggs. R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 562, s. 54 (1).*

Similarly, the meat from chickens kept onsite may not be used unless it is slaughtered and inspected for approved entry into the food chain at a licensed provincial or federal meat plant:

*40. (1) The only meat permitted at a food premise is meat that has been obtained from an animal inspected in accordance with either Ontario Regulation 31/05 (Meat) made under the Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001 or the Meat Inspection Act (Canada) and that has been stamped and labelled or otherwise identified in accordance with that regulation or that Act. O. Reg. 101/06, s. 2 (1).*

Public Health requests that any home planning to keep chickens as a resident activity develop activity specific infection control policies and procedures to minimize the risk of disease transmission.

If either the eggs or meat from onsite chickens are used for food preparation of any kind, this would constitute a contravention of the regulation and may result in a charge under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*.

Please feel free to contact WDGPH should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



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