

BLOOD in your neighbor's backyard?

Urban farming, not so good for the animals

When a neighbor heard the screams, she panicked thinking a child had been injured. She raced to her backyard and looked frantically for the source of the blood-curdling cry. Peering over the fence, she was horrified to find a man restraining a piglet, blade raised to cut her neck. For months, she had snuck the piglet treats, fascinated by the idea of having a farm animal in her urban neighborhood. Before she could protest, the piglet lay dying on the lawn, her blood staining the grass red...the color of urban animal farming.



Rabbits like these were being raised for slaughter in an apartment.



Baby chicks may look cute, but they can pose a health concern.

URBAN ANIMAL FARMING — A GROWING PROBLEM

In the past several years, the interest in raising and slaughtering animals in non-traditional settings, like one's backyard has grown dramatically.

Proponents argue it's a sustainable alternative to industrial farming, a way to be closer to one's food source. Opponents argue animal farming has no place in urban areas, that it is poorly regulated and fraught with health and animal welfare problems.

While it is important to recognize the growing awareness of how detrimental industrial animal agriculture is to the animals, environment and human health, is urban animal farming the answer?

ANIMAL WELFARE

In late June, Oakland Animal Services and the East Bay SPCA received a call that rabbits were being abused in an apartment complex. When officials obtained a warrant and entered the premises, they found 21 malnourished rabbits stacked two high in wire cages. The animals were being raised for their flesh on a diet of white rice, a diet that left many deformed. The person

What can be done?

BE THEIR VOICE: You have power! Creating a more compassionate world involves strengthening — not loosening — existing laws. When you hear of a possible ordinance change to allow the raising or slaughtering animals in your city, contact your city council and actively oppose it.

REPORT IT: If you ever see farm animals being neglected or abused, call animal control and demand action is taken.

HELP FARM ANIMALS: By choosing a plant-based diet, even if one day a week, you will make a positive impact by reducing the demand for animal products.



Sally saved herself from backyard slaughter!

responsible for the rabbits did not have any permits to raise the rabbits.

A few months prior, we took in a 5-month-old piglet from a small suburban backyard. The pig was being raised illegally for slaughter. It was the concerns of a neighbor that led to an investigation. The piglet would eventually save herself by breaking out of the yard — police and animal control confiscated her. Although the piglet, Sally, was saved she was the second pig this family had raised for slaughter, despite its illegality.

Backyard slaughter is not regulated well, if at all. Animals can be killed using any means, and almost always causing great suffering. The care of livestock is poorly monitored. Rarely do animal control agencies have the resources to investigate cases of farm animal abuse. And when they do, it is even rarer that the animals will be confiscated and placed into safe homes.

HEALTH CONCERNS

In July, dozens of children and adults were sickened during a Salmonella outbreak. The source was chicks and ducklings purchased from a hatchery (and sold at feed-stores) and mishandled by the

general public. The animals were all being sold for egg production and their flesh to fill the growing market of “backyard farmers.”

Unfortunately, neither the hatchery nor feed store put much effort in educating the public about the possible health problems with mishandling farmed animals, especially chickens and ducks. At Animal Place, for example, adoptable chickens are de-wormed, handled properly, and adopters are educated on the pitfalls of backyard chickens, including possible zoonotic diseases, like Salmonella.

Hatcheries and feed stores that profit off the mass sales of living animals do not have the time or inclination to bother with education...not when the bottom line is money, instead of health or welfare.

Other human health concerns of raising animals in urban areas include E. coli (see Page 10), increased number of flies who carry disease, increased risk of asthma due to poor waste management, and the psychological trauma some may endure from watching or hearing the screams of animals being killed.

This is not the solution, not for anybody.