

Sarah Mayer *Public Comment - Blue Oak Ranch*



3

From: Katherine Anderson <blueoaksb@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, January 5, 2024 4:58 PM
To: sbcob
Subject: Public Comment for Board 1-9-24
Attachments: Blue Oak Ranch Public Comment BOS 1-9-24 PDF.pdf

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Hello,

Attached please find my letter for public comment on the rooster ordinance before the Board of Supervisors hearing of 1-9-24.

Thanks, and best,

Katherine Anderson
Blue Oak Ranch
Goleta, CA



January 5, 2024

Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

By email: sbcob@countyofsb.org

Dear Chair and Honorable Supervisors,

I am writing to you in protest of a potential ordinance placing limits on the number of roosters on agricultural properties. In its zeal to issues that are already dealt with in the current civil and criminal codes, the Board has not considered the harm or hardship such an ordinance would place on Santa Barbara's small poultry producers.

I have a small farm and ranch and have been producing pastured poultry and eggs for farm-to-consumer sales and the restaurant/hotel trade for over 20 years. I have become well known in the local community by helping thousands of local families with backyard poultry through Island Seed and Feed in Goleta. For over 2 decades, I have also been involved with heirloom and rare breed conservation of poultry.

Local Meat Production

Raising meat chickens involves batches of 50-200 birds at a time – half of which are roosters. In practice, chickens are raised in staggered batches one to several weeks apart. As such, I could have up to 600 chickens ranging in age from one week to 8 months of age, depending on the breed. With livestock, males generally have better feed conversion ratios and grow faster, heavier, and more efficiently than females. If a restaurant needed a faster maturation date, I might order meat chicks as ALL roosters. For my smaller acreage, limiting the number of roosters would cost me more feed for pounds of meat produced and negatively impact my bottom line.

For traditional or heirloom breeds of chickens, hens are kept for egg production, and excess roosters are the ones that are eaten. This has been the tradition and pattern of small farmers and

family growers to produce food for themselves. Heirloom poultry taste better, largely because of their slower growth and maturation rate. Heirloom roosters are slaughtered well after adult plumage has grown in. Cockerels are cheaper than pullets, so to efficiently and economically fill a freezer a family may need to raise larger batches. A regular customer at Island orders 50 to 60 heirloom roosters per year to feed his growing family.

I can't think of another instance where a meat producer would have to obtain a permit for male meat animals, nor a family to ask permission to feed itself. For example, it would be ludicrous to force a rancher to obtain a permit for bulls in his or her beef herd.

Heirloom and Rare Breed Poultry

Heirloom poultry are facing a dramatic loss of genetic diversity. Commercial flocks are narrowly inbred, leaving them vulnerable to catastrophic loss by disease.

All ranchers know the adage that the breeding male is "half of your herd." For genetic conservation, this is critically important. To avoid genetic bottlenecks created by too few males, The American Livestock Breed Conservancy recommends a male-to-female breeding ratio as close to 1:1 as possible. Additionally, a producer must ensure the best of a breed's stock is selected to continue the gene pool. In order to accomplish this, roosters must be grown to full adult age to assess their qualities, of which as few as 10% of these may qualify as breeders.

Local conservation and production of heirloom or rare breed poultry allows local sourcing of poultry for FFA/4-H poultry projects.

Poultry biology does not lend itself well to cryogenic preservation of sperm or ova. To conserve rare or endangered breeds, one must breed them. Limiting the number of roosters would seriously hamper any conservation of rare breed or heirloom chickens.

Chicken production can be an efficient agricultural component and allow the viability of small farms. Heirloom poultry are part of a sustainable approach to agriculture, and any limit to the number of roosters may cause an impact of a farmer or ranchers right to farm.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Katherine Anderson', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Katherine Anderson
Blue Oak Ranch