



Information Brief

Meeting: March 16th 2020
Agenda Item: 4.1

URBAN CHICKENS AND BEES SURVEYS

Background:

Administration was directed to seek public input with respect to allowing Urban Chickens and Bees in the Town of Nanton. Online surveys were undertaken.

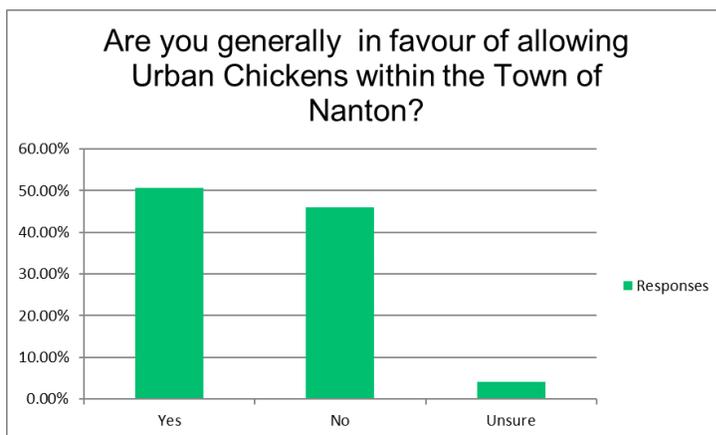
The term 'urban chickens' refers to the keeping of a small number of female chickens or 'hens' in an urban setting. 'Urban Bees' refers to the same for a small number of honeybee hives.

IF Council wishes to proceed to an RFD and proposed bylaw(s), a resolution for Administration and the Services Committee to continue this work should be made.

Survey Considerations:

- Conducting an online survey based on willingness to respond is not the same as conducting a survey by use of a genuine random sample of the community. By their nature, these online surveys will often attract the respondents most in favour and most opposed to the ideas put forward – it will only attract a limited number of those in the community who are uncertain or unmotivated to take the survey. This can result in polarized results which are not necessarily representative of community views overall, even if they do have indicative value.
- Certain demographics in the community are less likely to be aware of and access online surveys.
- The appeal to a small municipality of using online surveys is the very low level of administration and data entry required after the survey is designed and launched.
- They should not be treated or considered as a true referendum or plebiscite of the local population, but as an aid in decision-making.

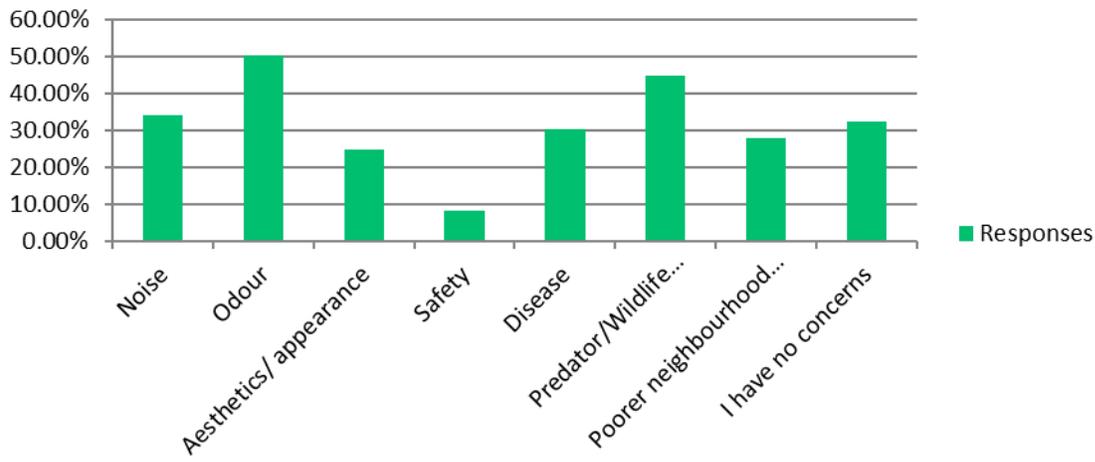
URBAN CHICKEN SURVEY RESULTS: January 19th-February 23rd 2020



Answered: 270

This response is marked not only by the impressive response, but the division over the central question.

What are your primary concerns with allowing Urban Chickens (select all that apply)?

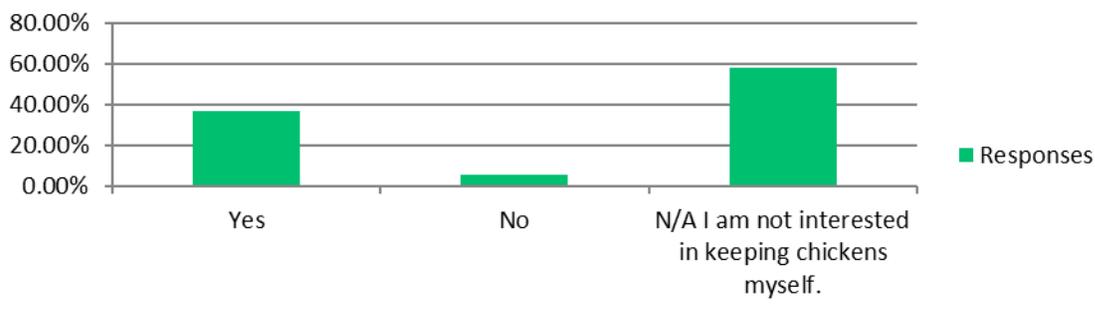


Answered: 259

32% of respondents had no concerns.

Respondents' most significant concerns were odour and predator/wildlife attractants.

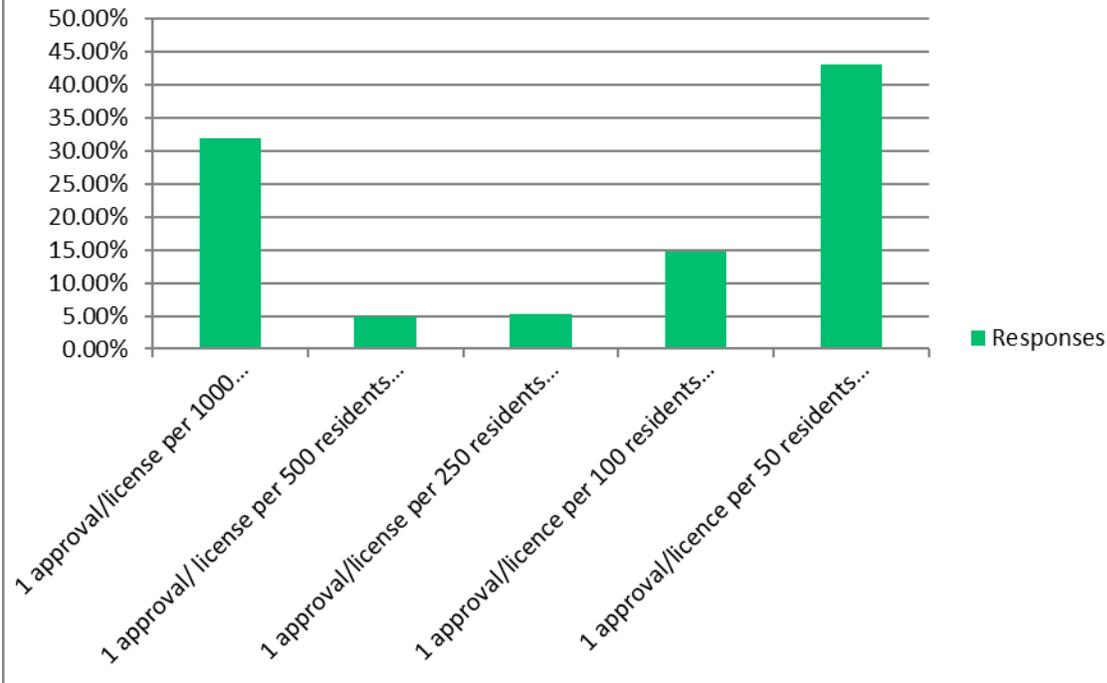
If the Town approved Urban Chickens, would you accept the requirements to obey a regulatory bylaw, the directions of Peace Officers when requested and annually remit a licencing fee to the Town?



Answered: 255

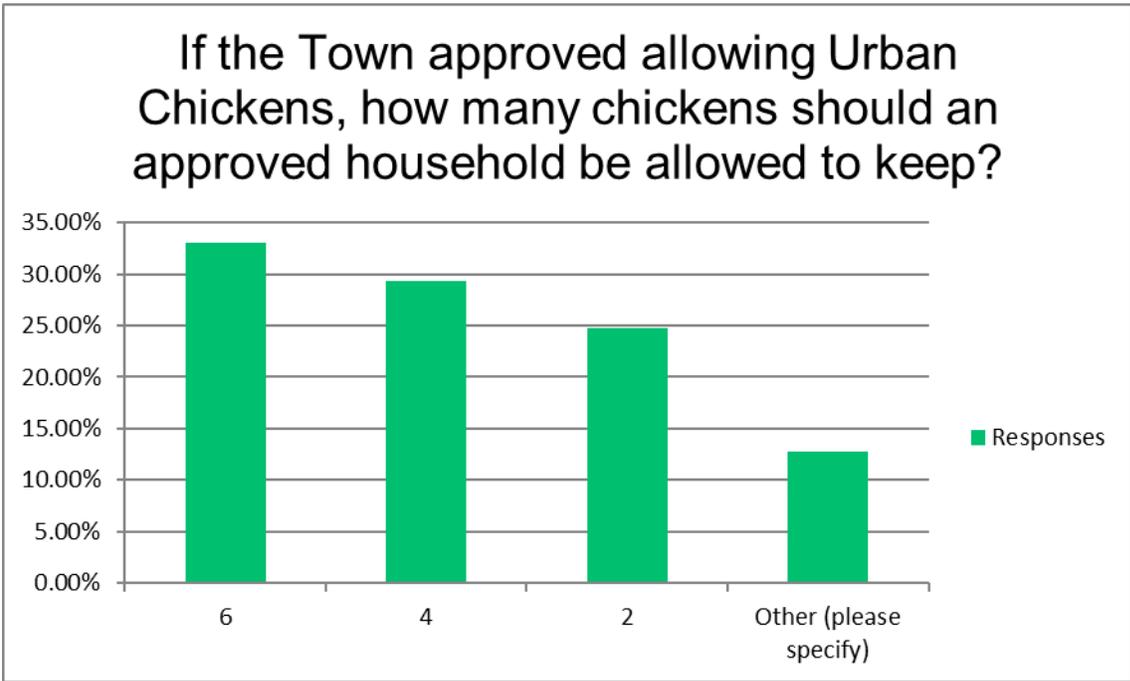
This question was primarily aimed at those potentially interested in having Urban Chickens. This indicated a significant number of individuals (94) who were both interested and open to a regulatory bylaw. It also showed that over 55% of respondents have no interest in keeping urban chickens.

If the Town approved allowing Urban Chickens, how many households across Town do you think should be able to secure a discretionary approval to keep a specified number of chickens?



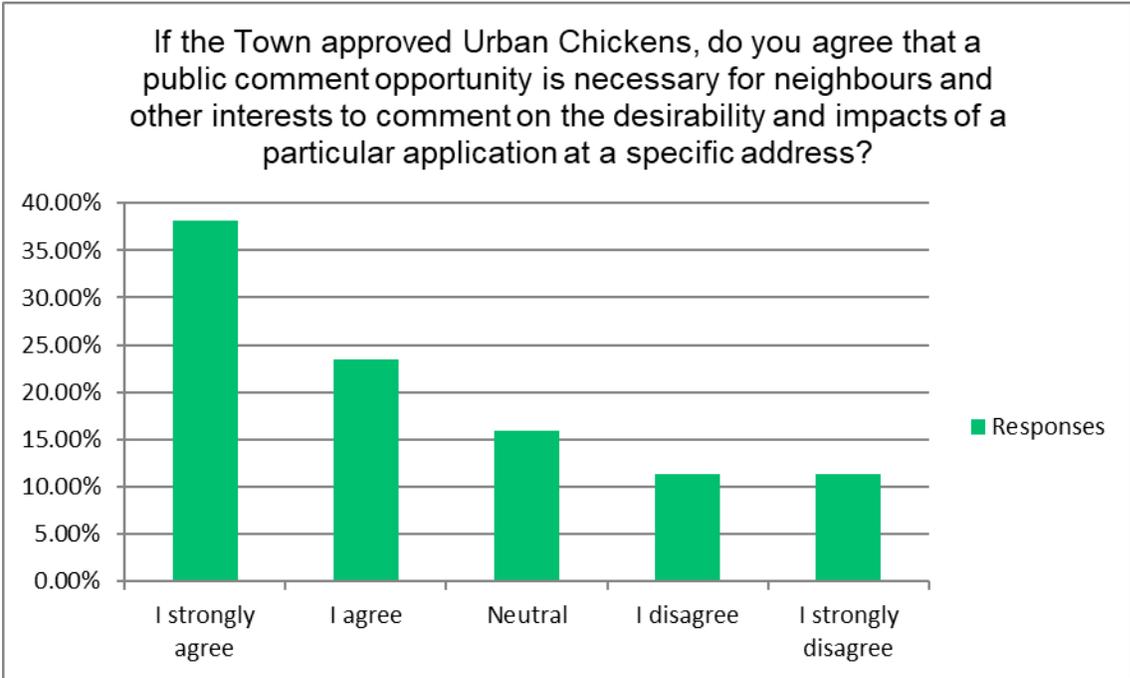
Answered: 244

This was a more thought-provoking question to see if there were any firm community views on how many licences for Urban chickens should be issued if Council took the concept forward. Given the polarized nature of the sample, however, those in support of the concept selected the largest number of potential licences and those most opposed picked the smaller numbers of potential licences. Staff would be unlikely to recommend either extremity (2 or 40 licenses/ households) for an initial period with a bylaw.



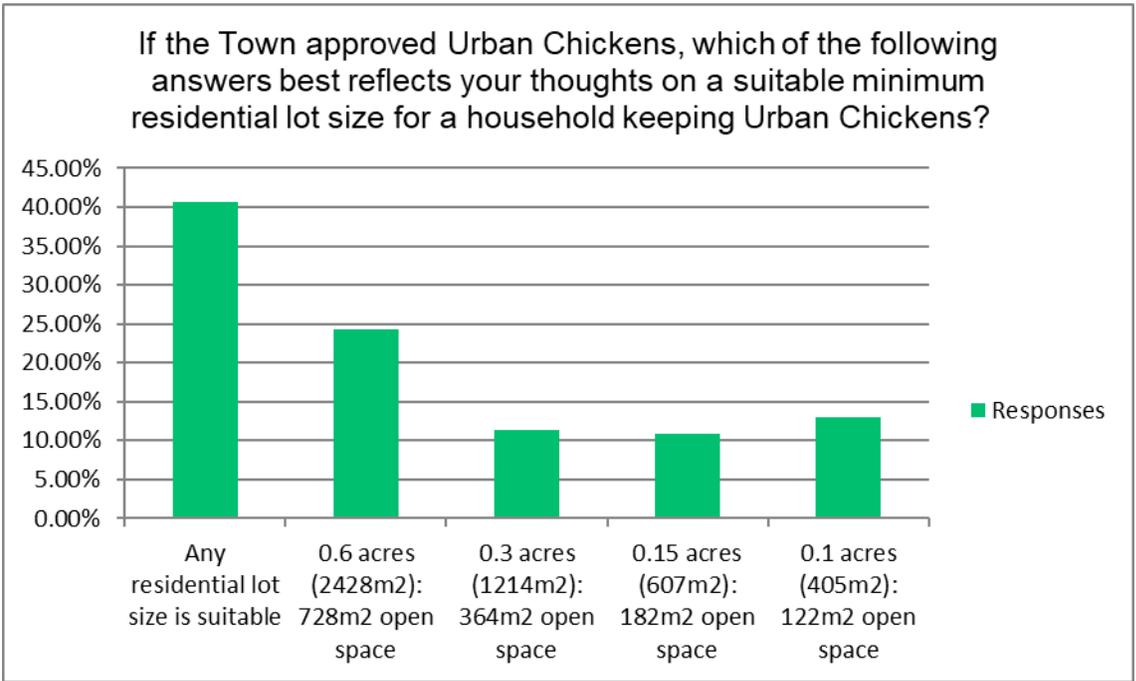
Answered: 242

There was no consensus on this question. Other response varied from '0' to 3, 10 and 12. Staff would not recommend more than 6 Urban Chickens per household/ licence.



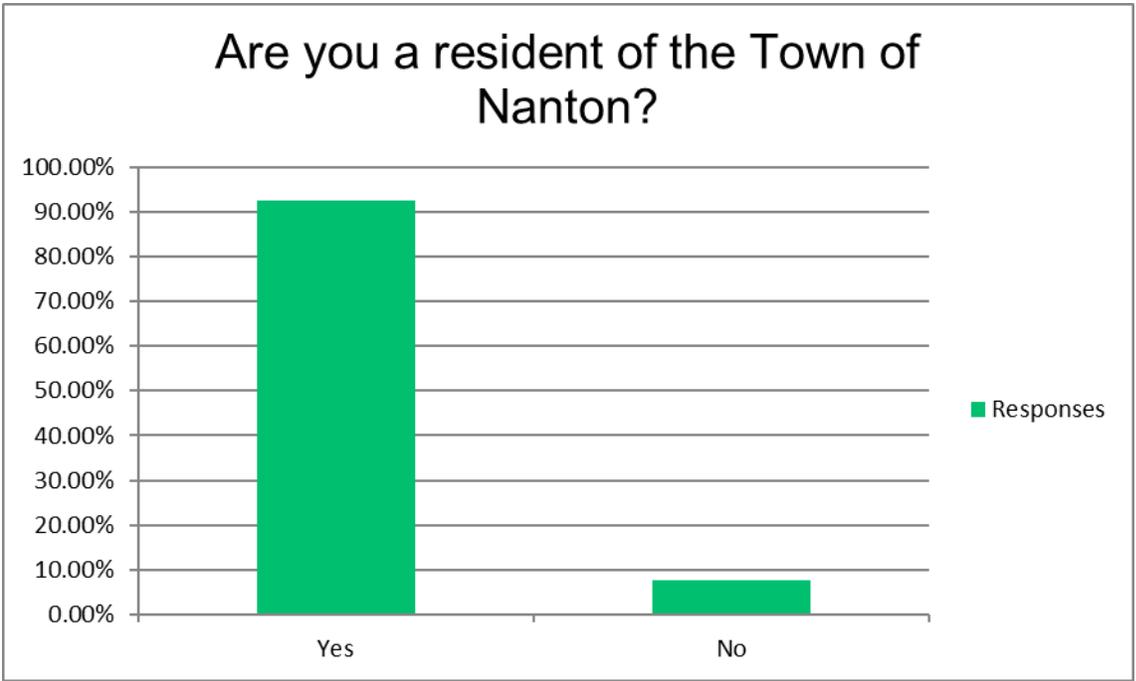
Answered: 239

A narrow, but clear, majority favour a public comment or participation opportunity for neighbours or other interests to comment on how licence applications might impact them.



Answered: 239

This question was asked to see if there was any community consensus over the size of property Urban Chickens should be limited to. Similarly, to the number of licences question, many respondents went to 'Any', '0.1 acres' or '0.6 acres', endorsing either the most flexible or restrictive scenarios. While this question asks an important question, the responses are not particularly helpful. In a polarized situation on the topic, Council may not wish to pick either extreme on the spectrum.



Answered: 239

Comments

27% of 238 respondents left a comment. Comments that went beyond either basic support or opposition are listed here, as well as shorter answers that introduced a specific concern or issue.

"In my research, we have chicken farms already supplying eggs and poultry to the area. The more we allow residents to control, the more problems will occur. We are trying to save money as it is and introducing a program that would suck up more resources policing, protecting, punishing those who don't take care of their responsibilities and end up forcing the Animal Protection Society to clean up the problem of where the overdue chickens would go, is another issue. Just too many problems with this when there are already chicken farms that should be utilized in the area."

"Allergy issues."

"Make sure the peace officer acts if someone makes a mess of their chicken (other licensees might take them on) absolutely no rooster!"

"If you want chickens or any other animals buy an acreage. Town is for people."

"What is the reason for wanting chickens on town? Cheaper eggs? Considering the care and upkeep of the chickens will not provide cheaper eggs."

"Certificate of urban chicken should be required."

"If my neighbours have chickens, I would seriously consider moving to another Town."

"If you are going to allow chickens in town then every home owner should be able to apply."

"The number of chickens should depend on the lot size and how they plan to keep them."

"I honestly can't believe this is even an issue. Opening this up for public debate would give a TON of people who know absolutely nothing about chickens to weigh in with their (uneducated) opinions. Make the call, yes or no, and then be done with it!"

"While I don't care either way if urban chickens enter Nanton (I have no intention of having them) I think the town needs to prepare for the backlash from people who will be so against this change. I totally see this becoming an ongoing rant on the rant or rave Nanton Facebook page of the urban chickens are approve."

"I understand that a license is useful for the town to maintain some control and to avoid abuses, but believe that it is important that the license fee is kept low enough that it is still practical to keep hens. I am also concerned about the insurance clause."

"Although I'm not presently living in Nanton, I believe as a home owner/tax player that this could be a good opportunity for the residents considering that something will have to be in place to handle the waste generated."

"Nanton is located in the heart of an agricultural area. If you want fresh eggs lots of people are willing to sell them to you for a reasonable price."

"Town is not the place for livestock. If residents want livestock they should have bought an acreage."

"Nanton is a rural community. Farm animals belong in the country, not in Town."

"While I personally wouldn't keep chickens, I think it should be allowed as long as there is strict compliance."

“Under the economic situation in Alberta it would be beneficial for people to have the option to grow their own food. THAT IS SUSTAINABILITY.”

“We have many farmers around town that can supply eggs to the community. I think chicken are stinky. And should not be in town. And how is bylaw suppose to inforce rule when they are never in town nor deal with other bylaw that they cant keep up with???”

“We have a large lot and might be touch and go on whether we would have 122 m sq of empty space. Also animal welfare would be a consideration, as in are the chickens being well cared for (food water shelter).”

“If a resident is able to keep dogs and cats in their yard, I believe other livestock should not be a problem. If these residents are not taking care of their animals, including cleaning up their feces, then this person should not be able to keep animals. I have a hard time understanding why dogs and cats get preferential treatment.”

“This town is horrible so let citizens have bees and chickens. Not a certified bee keeper. Having bees greatly helps the environment. Many other towns have hobby bee keepers without any issues. Chickens don’t smell and make a mess if you are a responsible owner. I probably could guarantee with the people that live here neither would be passed. They are old, nosy, unwelcoming and unfriendly. Let’s get a proper grocery store in town.”

“All those desiring to have chickens should be required to take a course on handling chickens as was applied in High River. Also what and where will the manure be taken to or how will it be handled. Do not need a chicken manure dump area within the town.”

“We live in a rural highly agricultural area with many opportunities to purchase farm fresh eggs as it is. Why add more burden to bylaw and administration by implementing Urban Chickens. I feel these resources could be put to better use. Additionally I believe urban chickens would attract predators and could cause neighbor issues which again would mean the town would have to step in at some time. Seems to me that this would add more problems than anything.”

“Chickens are gross birds. Why should I have to put up with my neighbors chickens so the hippie can have fresh eggs. Move to an acreage if you want ** chickens.”***

“I do not think we need chickens in town. And I think asking neighbors for approval is silly, in all honesty people in this town will agree to something and than call bylaw over and over and said neighbors who are following the rules and have approval for projects. I think this is a waste of town resources at this current time.”

“Chickens are rats with wings. There is a reason why livestock is not allowed inside of towns. Odour, diseases, noise, coyote bait, all reasons not to have these filthy things in town.”

“Proper education on keeping chickens needs to be looked at. No roosters, as the noise is considerably more, proper care and housing, coop care should be mandatory for keeping hens.”

“If it is approved and a chicken house is required then will that chicken house be an addition to my taxes?”

“Properties with more than 1 acre should definitely be able to keep some chickens. I'll give you some fresh eggs I promise! Love our new town guys. Happy to be here!”

“...Strongly do not want chickens in town, it well bring in more coyotes and skunks etc. We have enough skunks in town that the town doesn’t deal with and if there are children playing and a coyote or other wild life come around because of the chickens and say my grand child gets hurt then I swear there well be hell to pay. This is a town life if you want a farm life go bye

or rent land from a farmer, the stray cats going in and out and bringing the shit out of the residence who have the chickens and spreading it around to other people's places, we pay a lot of taxes in this town and we don't see many results for our money.. but the town is not concerned about flipping chickens ?????? I am strongly against this !!!!!"

"I'm generally in favour of something like this, but I feel that here in Nanton. We are surrounded by agriculture. We don't need it in town."

"Who will enforce the bylaws when the peace officers are only in town part time."

"I'll move if this happens. Get a acreage if you want chickens. What's next."

"As there are already issues and concerns in town about unleashed dogs, and cats running freely off owner's property, is it fair to ask Peace Officers to manage more animals??? I would rather they manage people."

"My main concern for keeping chickens within town is the animal health aspect as inexperienced owners may not have the animal husbandry education for keeping poultry. Simply taking a course in chicken keeping is not the same as experience. Also, should the neighbours not be in agreement with coops in the area, their perception of the the impact on the property value, as well as resentments, could negatively affect the community."

"High river has done this really nicely. I would suggest working with them to implement this."

"We need to start working to local food sustainability."

"I am torn on the issue of neighbour feedback if an application is made to house chickens. I believe strongly that a say is important when your environment my change. On the other hand, no one is denied the ability to acquire a dog(s) which could have a much more detrimental impact on neighbours than chickens."

"It would make me want to sell and leave."

"Even 6 hens need only a small space, not much larger than a two story dog house. Should be regulations about the construction of the hen house."

"Would they attract more foxes, coyotes, skunks etc. into our yards? Odour could be another issue. I imagine there would have to be minimum standards imposed regarding their accommodations and fencing."

"Would like to know how complaints will be handled. Who is paying for clean up if person isn't complying with rules."

"Either do it for all who wish to keep chickens or don't allow it at all. Should be the same as a dog but with more regulation on how they are housed and maintained. Perhaps license 1 as a pet, up to 4 as egg layers and up to 6 with an additional charge. If you start letting neighbors have a yay/nay say, it will just be problems. But remember this will become a problem with feral cats looking for food and unleashed dogs. We had a rabbit in a secure outside cage and dogs running at large were the reason we had to part with her."

"I don't think there should be a cap on how many house holds are allowed to obtain a permit and should also not have to meet neighbours approvals, that could be met with as much anger as allowing hens, as long as regulations are kept anyone should be allowed a license."

"Keeping chickens is healthy, entertaining, teaches children where food comes from."

“The info session I went to also said the chickens would have to always be inside. But an amazing thing about chickens is that they eat garden pests... Locking them away would not help with that. They should be able to be outside in people’s gardens (within reason...).”

“I think this is a fabulous idea, and in spite of the fear there may be about chickens in every backyard, noise, pestilence and vermin, keeping chickens properly is so much work that very few will do it, but those interested should be allowed to pursue this. Looking forward to the open house.”

“I think this is an awesome idea and hope it goes through soon maybe I can get chickens for my birthday in June... I’m gonna tell everyone you did it just for me anyway. Thank you I look forward to the approval so awesome.”

“Please do not allow chickens within town limits, there are farm fresh eggs at the grocery store and no need for people to own chickens. The majority of residents in this town rarely keep their lawns tidy, clean up after their pets or keep the garbage out of their back alleys. Maybe focus on cleaning up existing messy lots before you let people create more mess.”

“Please devote the time of Council, Administration, Town Workers and Bylaw officers to MORE serious issues than this subject. Many people in Town are working to portray Nanton as a Modern, up to date Town and now this to make us go backwards.”

“I was raised on a farm with chickens. There is no way I want chickens any where near me in town. The smell of chicken shit is second only to pigs. It is awful. Chickens carry a number of diseases. Some of these are transferable across species and can make cats, dogs and even humans ill. This town already has issues with skunks If we put chickens in town that will increase and will likely add the local fox and coyote and weasel population into the mix. Although minor, chicken clucking is highly irritating.”

“By the same logic presented in this survey, my neighbour who applies pesticides to his property and the toxic fumes impact our family and kill polinators, should be required to do get a permit and notify the public. Chickens dont smell and are not noisy. The hundres of doves in our trees are a much greater nuisance than a couple of chickens.”

“I moved out to the country for peace and quiet. If I wanted to be around chickens, I’d have bought an acreage. If people in town want chickens as pets, they should relocate to an acreage. If they want them for food, we have a large supply of totally organic and affordable eggs and meat supplies by local farmers. We can’t even enforce dog poop and parking bylaws. There won’t be any enforcement for this chicken bylaw. It is already difficult to sell a home in nanton. It would be nearly impossible to sell if there were chickens as neighbours. Resale would be further reduced. It just isn’t fair. I’m sure if people need to have chickens, there can be a small area of land outside town limits that they can have a co-op of some kind.”

“I think everyone who wants to keep chickens should be allowed to do so provided they meet the bylaw. Not restricting the number of households allowed to get a license.”

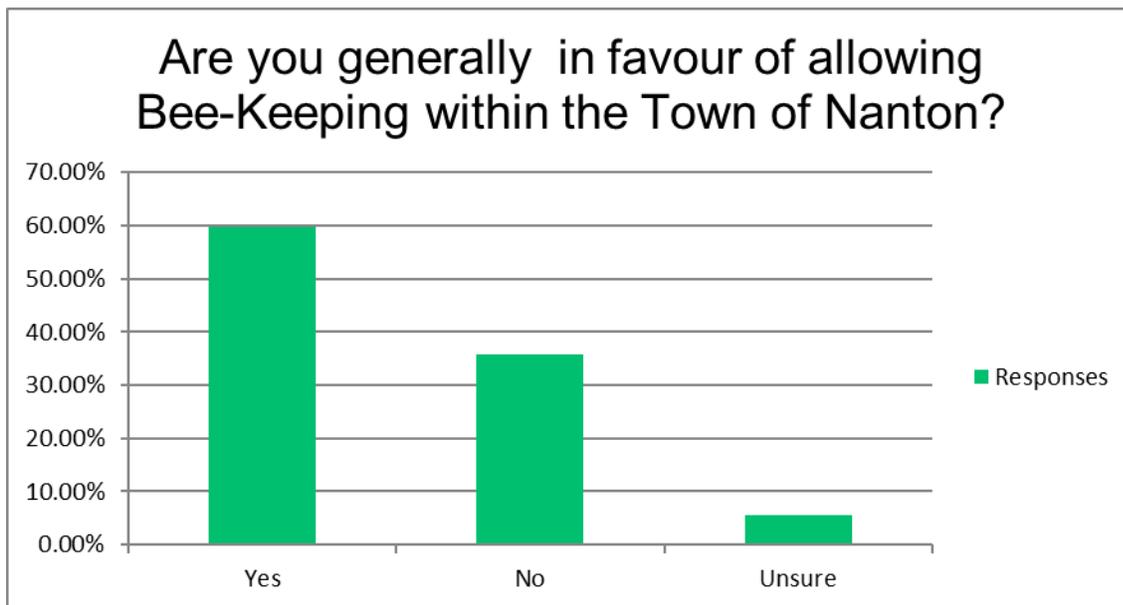
“I strongly oppose urban chickens noise disease predators odor and other problems. If people wish to live a rural lifestyle then move out of town.”

“I would be very upset if chickens were in town. Buy an acreage if you want chickens. I would move to HighRiver. This is a bad idea..... what’s next other livestock? Please don’t I grew up on a farm. In town is not the place for them.”

“I adamantly feel that “urban chickens” should NOT be permitted in Nanton. This will cause grief between neighbors and seems to be a waste of councils time and \$ - not to mention the future impact on peace officers time and resources.”

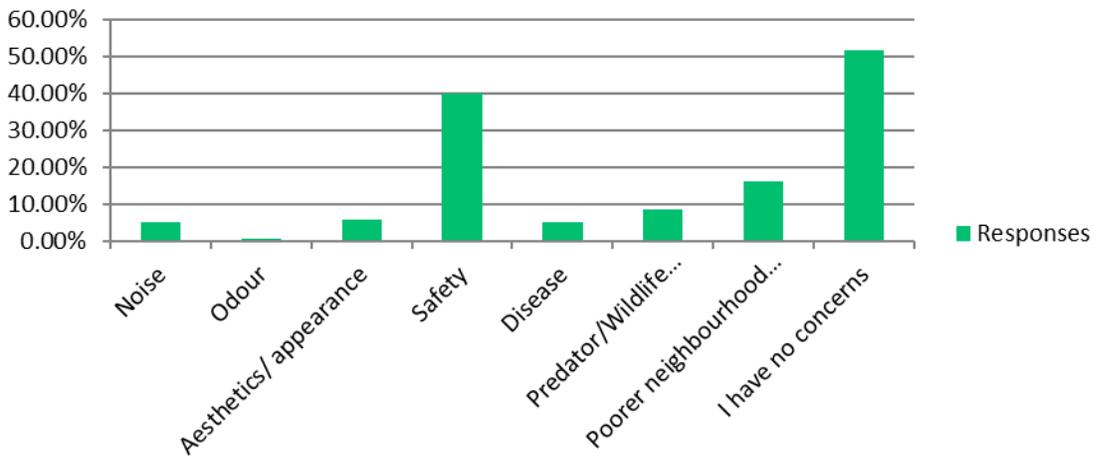
“This isn’t okotoks. Its a small town in the middle of nowhere. I’m surprised there isn’t chickens. All the potential rules are off putting and i think only allowing certain people, at certain locations is discriminatory. I’m not sure the town will award licenses fairly without favoritism and allowing neighbours to decide your land use is so invasive and creepy. I don’t even talk to my neighbours, and now i would need their approval? And fees are prohibitive, it already costs to maintain chickens. So now only if your rich enough you can be part of the chicken club elite?”

URBAN BEE SURVEY RESULTS



Answered: 162

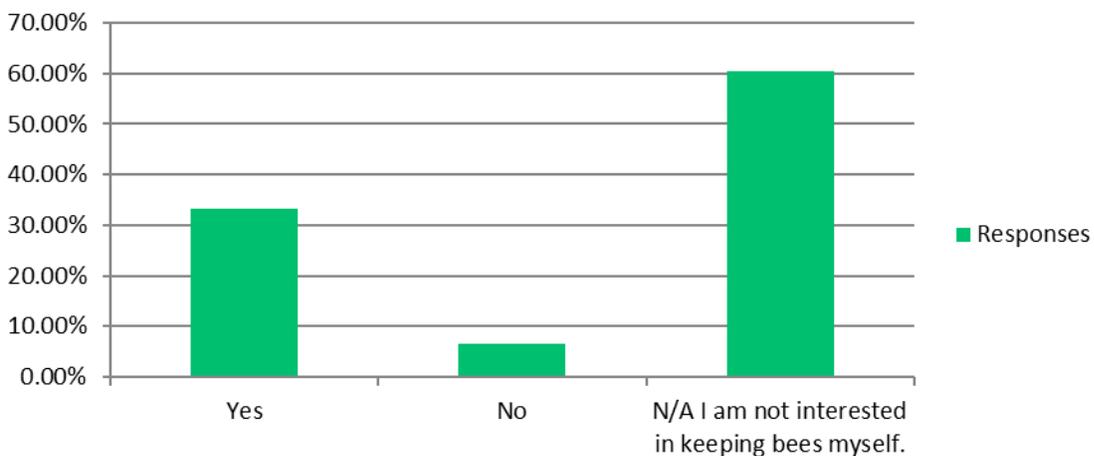
What are your primary concerns with allowing Urban Bees (select all that apply)?



Answered: 155

In contrast to the Urban Chicken survey, safety was the predominant concern of the respondents who had any (62). Reasons for this related to stings, allergies and swarming. One respondent made the point that bees themselves could be at risk from the use of cosmetic pesticides within urban limits.

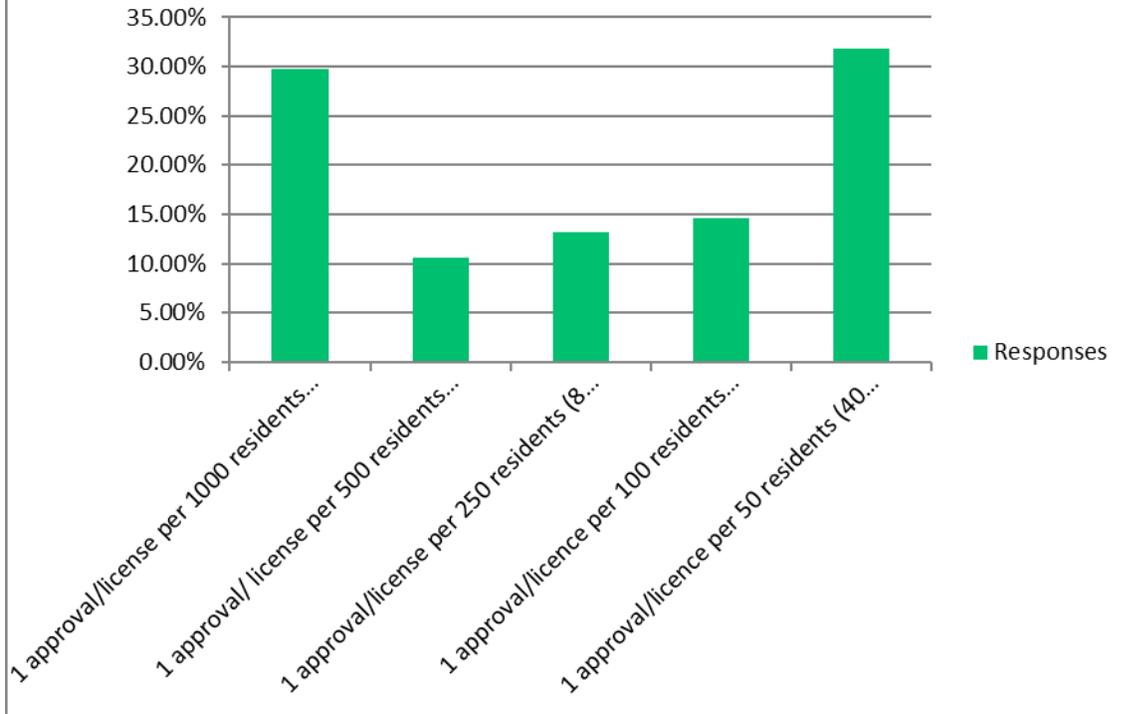
If the Town approved Urban Bees, would you accept the requirements to obey a regulatory bylaw, the directions of Peace Officers when requested and annually remit a licencing fee to the Town?



Answered: 154

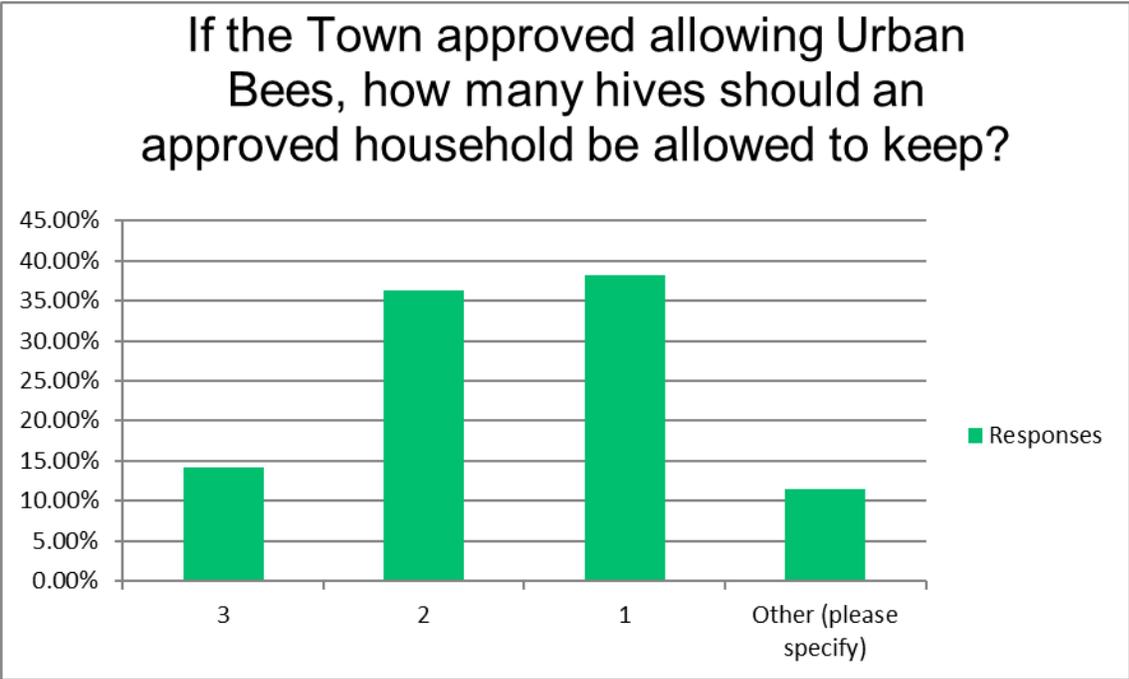
These responses indicated that 60 per cent of the sample had no interest in keeping bees themselves regardless of views. Written comments did indicate some concerns with respect to enforcement and compliance around any bylaw.

If the Town approved allowing Urban Bees, how many households across Town do you think should be able to secure a discretionary approval to keep a number of hives?



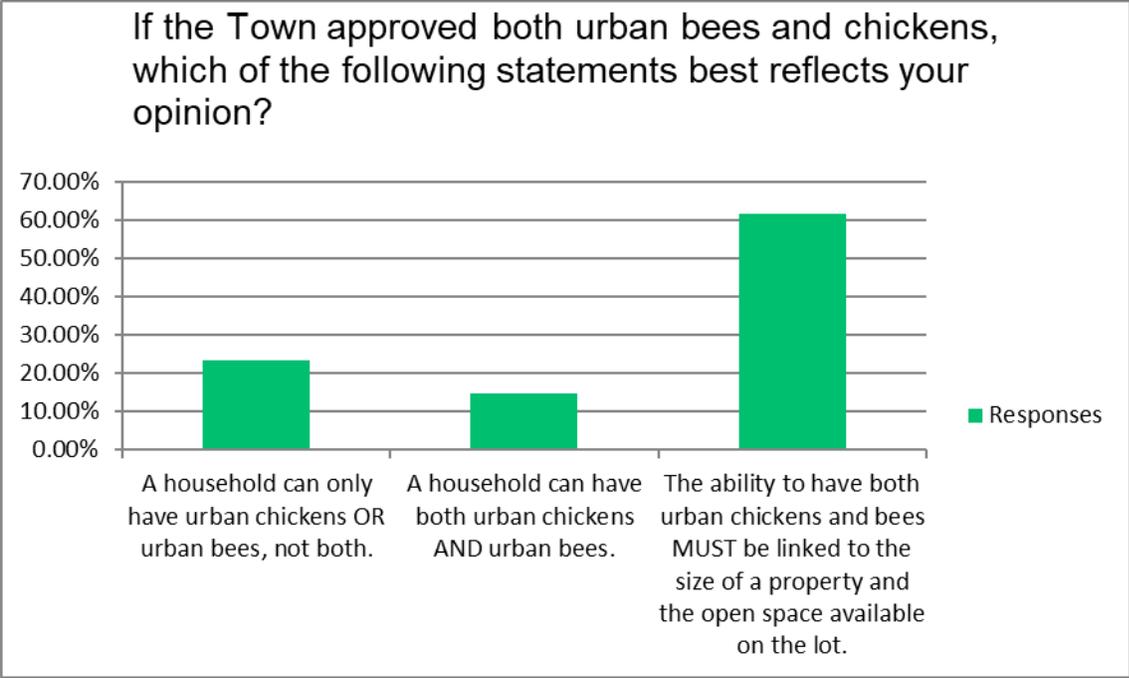
Answered: 151

As with the chicken survey, the respondents did not appear to have awareness of the relatively low frequency of licences in communities where such activities have been approved. Responses were similarly polarized between the lowest and highest frequencies of licence.



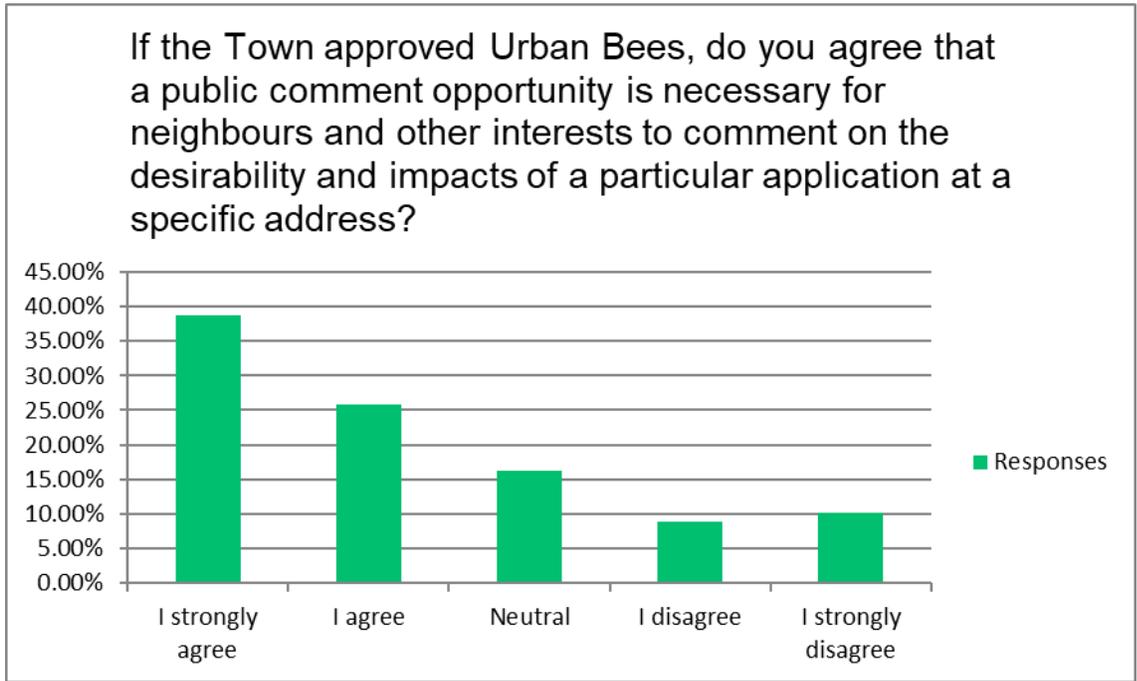
Answered: 149

There was little consensus on this question. "other" responses were largely oppositional '0' responses.



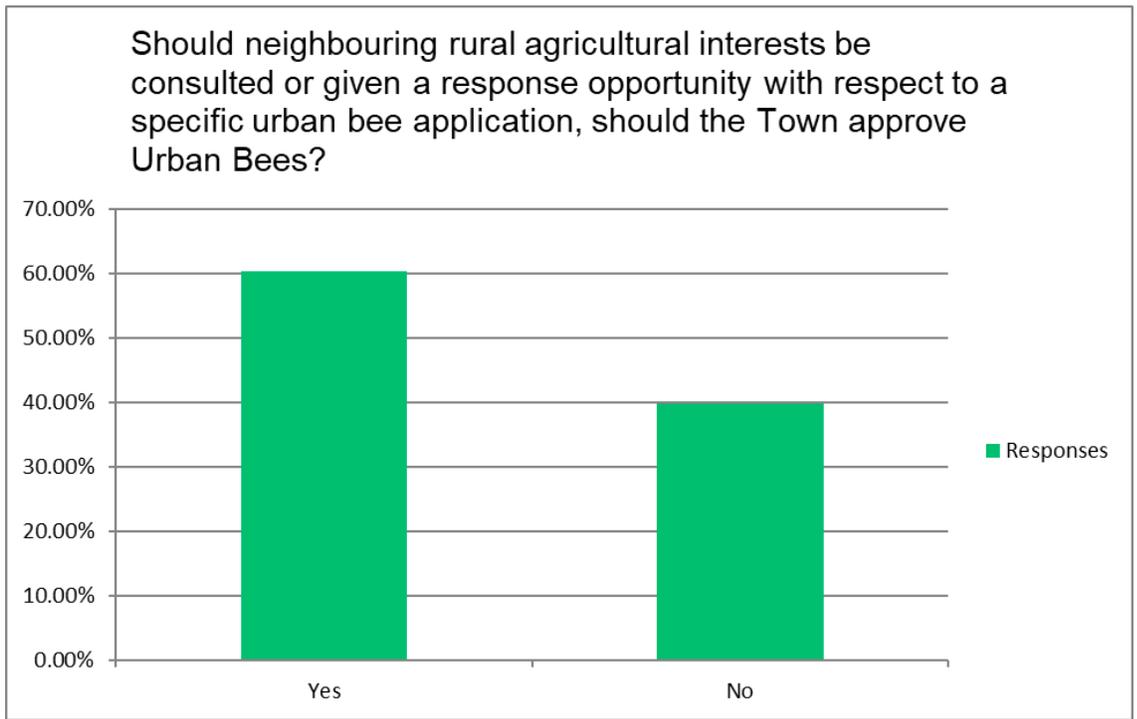
Answered: 149

This was a question added upon reflection of the Urban Chicken survey. There would appear to be some indication that in the case of the very small number of people who might want to keep both bees and chickens, there would be reasonable support for a lot size restriction of some description.



Answered: 147

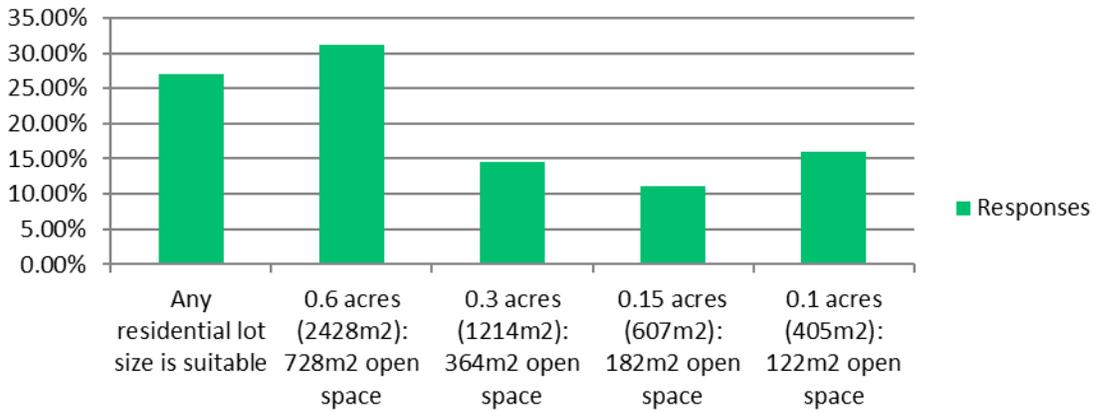
As with the urban chicken survey, there is solid support for public comment opportunities ahead of licence approvals.



Answered: 146

Interestingly, there was reasonable support for response opportunities being offered to neighbouring properties in the MD of Willow Creek.

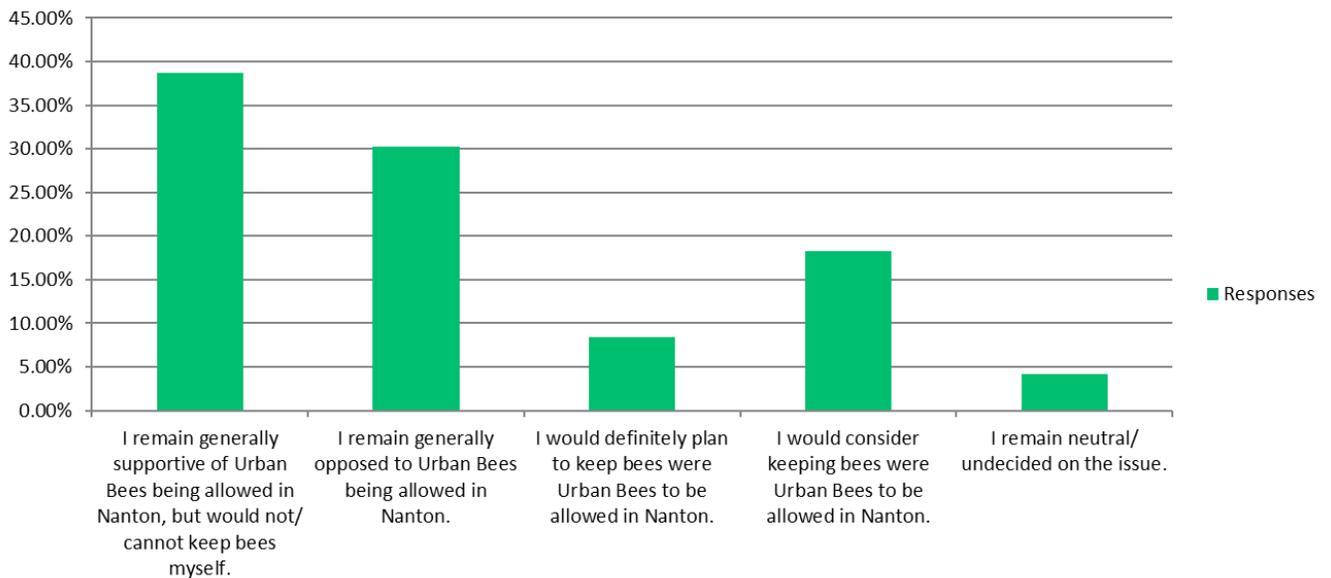
The Town could also impose lot size If the Town approved Urban Bees, which of the following answers best reflects your thoughts on a suitable minimum residential lot size for a household keeping Urban Bees?



Answered: 144

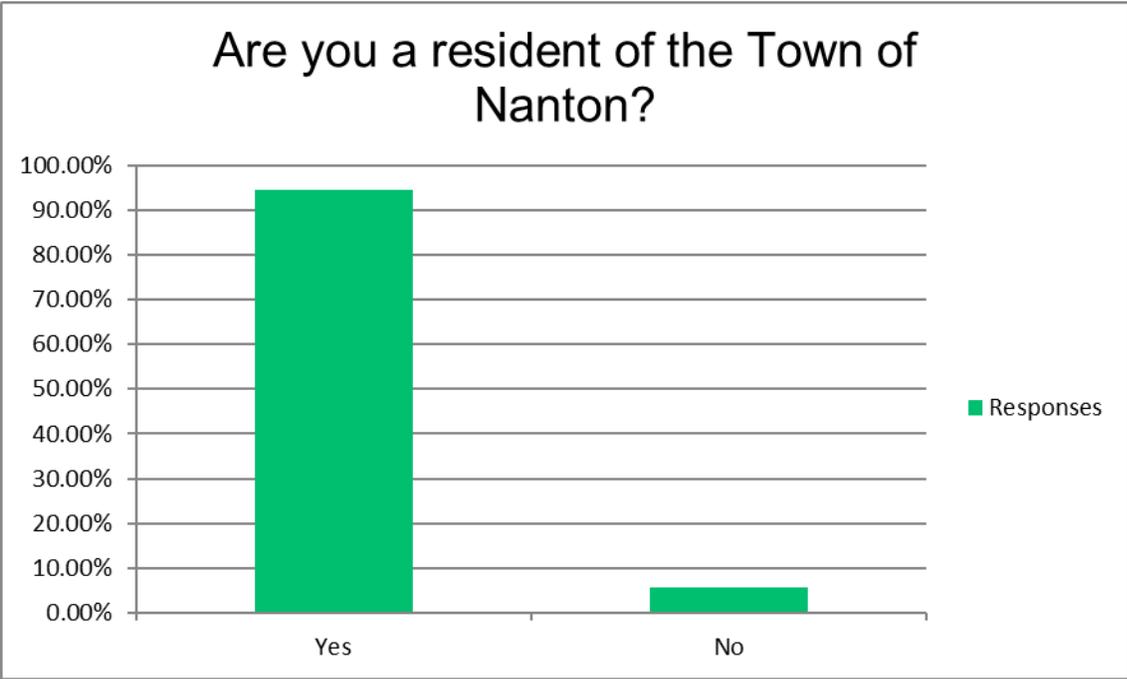
While there is a degree of polarization in these responses, it is not as strong as in the urban chicken survey, revealing some degree of consensus that the smallest lots in the community may not be viewed as suitable for urban bees.

Now that you have worked through the survey, please indicate which one of these responses best reflect you:



Answered: 142

Twelve (12) respondents indicated that they would definitely plan to keep bees, a further twenty six (26) would consider it. About 30% of the sample (43) remained opposed to Urban Bees.



Answered: 142

Most respondents were from the Town.

Comments

24% of the sample (34) left a comment. Comments that went beyond either basic support or opposition are listed here, as well as shorter answers that introduced a specific concern or issue.

Please keep the bees and chickens out of town. They do not belong here. Chickens will stink if not kept clean, inviting coyotes to town and how can a person control bees and make them stay in a hive? How will they get the pollen from the flowers? Besides that there several of us allergic to bee stings.
I am sure this is a minority of residents asking for this so are the majority being ignored. This survey should be inclosed in the unity bill and we should have a plebiscite.
Please consider the residents of your town who have no say if their neighbours get bees but this is a matter of life or death for them.
Although I do not live in Nanton I do own a property there. A couple of the questions on how many bees should be allowed (density etc) are difficult to answer without some idea of recommendations from people that are knowledgeable in this area.
My main concern would be people who have allergies especially children but will admit I am uneducated in be keeping
I have known someone who kept 2 hives in their back yard/garden on a plot smaller than 99% of the plots in Nanton without any problems whatsoever.
The questionnaire has some good questions. Unfortunately it assumes the user has so.w knowledge or experience about beekeeping. Having grown up with beehives on my property, i can tell you that none of the concerns at the beginning of the questionnaire are an issue. The only time bees attack is when you get within 10 m of the hive. The vast majority of the bees are worker bees and do not attack unless they have no other choice. Only a few are guard bees that protect the hive. Some research is needed to determine minimum distance to hives and hives per acer but i suspect you could have a much higher density than presented in the questionnaire (ie. 1 hive every 3 to 5 lots. We had 2 hives per acer and no one noticed them. Finally, bees like any pet need looking after. Care and attention are needed to make sure they dont swarm. It is only when they swarm they become a serious issue as you cant control where they land. Possibly some evidence that future bee owners know whst they are doing i.e. training course should be considered as a possible requirement lor else the town needs to have the expertise to deal with swarms for example.

the keeping of bees is a dangerous operation, the safety of animals and people must be first and foremost. anything other is reckless
Leave bee keeping to commercial operators in rural areas
This, like the chickens is a stupid idea. If I were council I would concentrate more on cutting taxes and staying on top of what we have already rather than this xxxx. I hope council takes a field trip to a hive and see how unpleasant it is to hang around a bee hive in the country let alone in the confinement of a town.
I have a network building on a farm field just outside of Langdon. There is bee keeping about 800 M from my building. Those bees are very bothersome and are constantly swarming my place of work. I hate them. If they are not fed properly they will look for food where you live.
Bees and chickens and anything else introduced to town will only increase costs, reduce resale of neighbouring homes, create animosity and our current bylaw enforcement is not effective. With other municipalities now ending their relationship with bylaw officers, this is going to create large issues.
Bees yes Chickens no
If we don't need neighbors approval to keep dogs then they shouldn't get a vote/opinion on bees.
I have a serious allergy to 🐝 so I would want to know that if a neighbor had them. Plus I should hope people know how to truly look after the hives
I feel that there should be confirmation of the number of persons residing in Nanton who would be at risk due to allergies AND the cost to those persons of having to carry EpiPens at all times. We do not have 24hr emergency services to deal with anaphylactic reactions.
I think the potential for nusscience is no different than a disagreeable dog(s) or cat(s) owner next door. Therefore I don't see how you can say no to chickens or bees.
I go inside during the spring run when bees flood my yard . I pay tax and should be able to enjoy piece of my yard The general public should not be in control of bee in nanton they are dangerous and can harm residents
Try to not make a mountain out of a mole hill. Look at models for urban keeping that exist in Calgary/Edmonton
Bee's like Chickens belong on a farm not in Town. This applies to All type of Farm animals big or small.
We are a small community surrounded by habitat that supports an astonishing number of wild bees. As well, we have a flourishing honey industry with domestic bees in our rural surroundings. Putting town resources to this whole project, from writing the bylaws to enforcing them is a monumental waste of resources.
Bees should be free. Neighbours are nosy enough.
Hoping to move to Nanton and we currently have 2 hives in the city.
I welcome town council or employees to view our bees and speak with our neighbours about the neighbour/bee interactions. 2412 23 St
Thanks for providing these surveys. In my opinion Nanton will be seen as a much more progressive town by allowing chickens and bee-keeping as long as there are reasonable standards/parameters.
Residents need to take courses in order to have bees. Whatever the Alberta Bee Council says is the best and most viable - we don't want to have hives dying off because of ignorance.
Our bylaw officers are having a hard enough time keeping up with the bylaws we do have. Where is the additional bylaw funding going to come from?
As I know little about beekeeping, I don't actually know what an acceptable minimum sized property would be, and assume there is information about what is most ethical for the bees, so my answer to that question would be whatever that recommendation is.

Conclusion:

Responses are indicative of both strong support and opposition within the community for these activities, Urban Chickens found to be particularly divisive. Communities like Okotoks, High River and Black Diamond have all adopted Urban Chicken Bylaws in recent years and have observed fairly low uptake in licensing (it is an expensive and time intensive hobby). It is notable that, after more positive survey

results than Nanton's in 2018, the Town of Innisfail did not proceed with permitting urban chickens, so this trend is resisted by some Councils.

Interestingly, adjacent agricultural interests have more concerns about Urban Bees than they do Urban Chickens – this has been communicated both anecdotally to the Town and through the survey.

Were either activity to proceed to bylaw, staff would draft bylaws that were somewhat sensitive to some of the local feedback (for first review), but would likely try to broadly emulate the High River model.

At the end of the day, this is a political decision of the elected officials – the processes and bylaws required are tried and tested in many communities and adoption/implementation for Nanton will not be difficult should a decision be taken to go forward.

IF Council wishes to proceed to an RFD and proposed bylaw(s), a resolution for Administration and the Services Committee to continue this work should be made.

NANTON

By CAO at 9:56:05 AM, 2020-03-13