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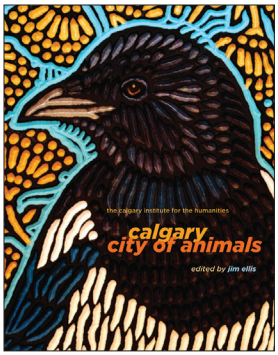

CALGARY: City of Animals
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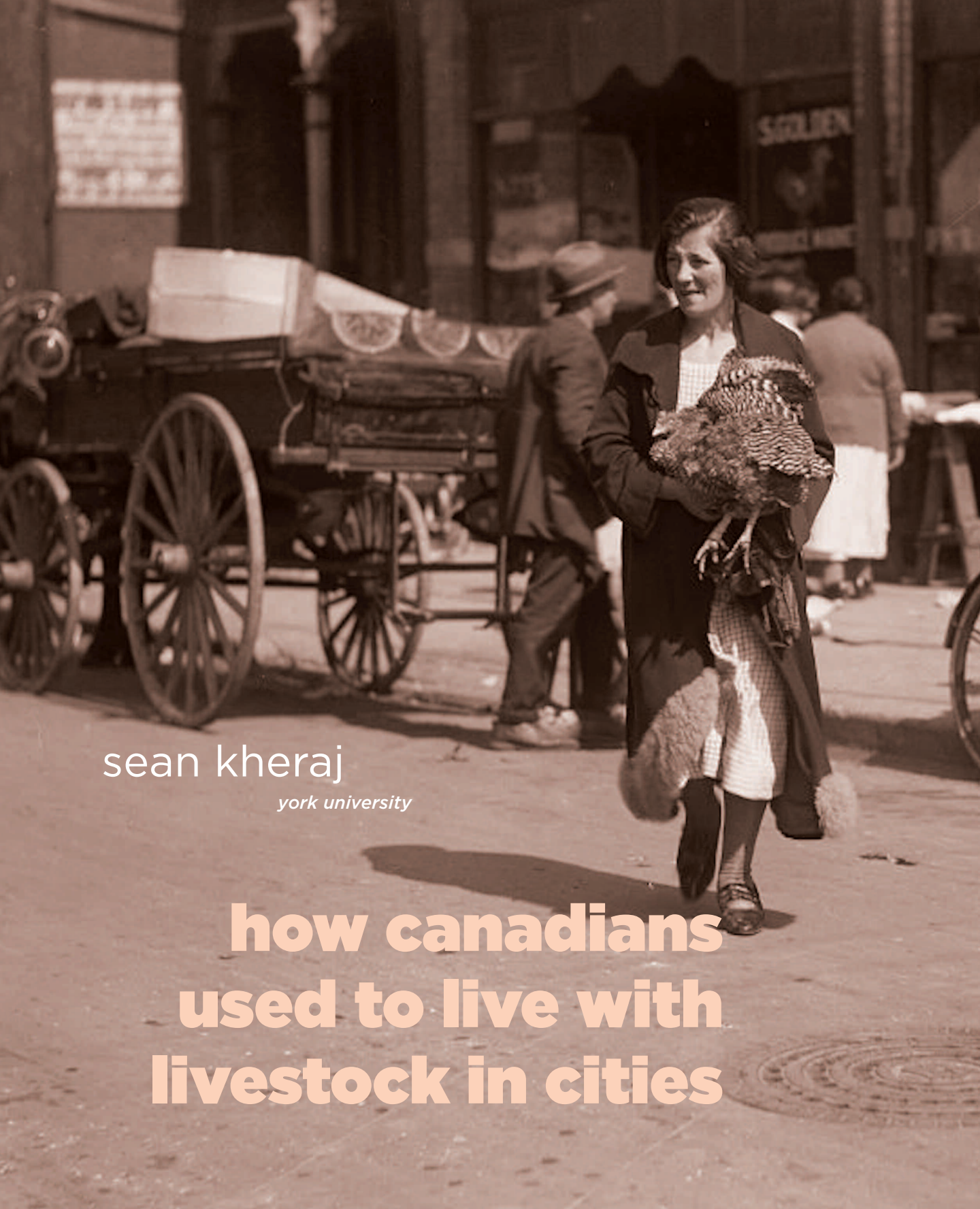

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how canadians used to live with livestock in cities

Calgary's city council has twice rejected proposals to permit residents to raise chickens in the city. In 2010 and 2015, a majority of council members voted against proposals for limited pilot programs for urban chicken raising. City councillors continue to refuse to accept the idea of urban livestock husbandry for Calgary.[3]

Paul Hughes, a Calgary resident, leads an organization called Canadian Liberated Urban Chicken Klub (CLUCK) that has fought for the legalization of urban chicken raising in Canada for several years. This food justice group advocates for the expansion of urban agriculture and livestock husbandry as a way of forging closer connections between urban dwellers and the food they eat. His group has now twice unsuccessfully sought to establish pilot urban chicken programs in Calgary.[4]

In the most recent debate over backyard chickens, councillors expressed concerns over a number of key issues associated with raising chickens in a city. Their concerns included noises, smells, the threat of disease, the management of unwanted and stray animals, and the cost of enforcing regulations. In spite of the support of the mayor and five members of council, the motion to approve a small pilot program for twenty households to begin raising chickens in the inner city failed to convince the nine opposing councillors. The City of Calgary's Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw continues, therefore, to prohibit livestock husbandry in the city. According to the city's animal services policy:

> Farm animals kept in residential backyards or commercial spaces are generally inappropriate for a dense urban environment. Keeping such animals introduces problems into the neighbourhood such as noise, odors and pests attracted to the animal's food and hay. And an urban environment doesn't provide an ideal living space for farm animals.[5]

In Calgary, there is no place for livestock husbandry in the city.

Calgary is not alone in its resistance to urban livestock. In recent years, Toronto has also rejected proposals to introduce backyard chicken programs. One councillor in Toronto flatly objected to the idea that livestock have any appropriate place in an urban environment. During one debate Councillor Frances Nunziata said, "If you want to have chickens then buy a farm, go to a farm."[6] From this perspective, livestock husbandry should be an exclusively rural practice.

Woman carrying a live hen on Kensington Avenue, Toronto ca. 1926.
Source: City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1266, Item 8245.

While city councils in Calgary and Toronto have refused to reform their bylaws to accommodate chickens in their urban environments, other cities in Canada have begun to embrace the notion of urban livestock. In British Columbia, city councils in Victoria, Vancouver, Surrey, and Kelowna have all approved limited backyard chicken programs in recent years, encouraging residents to raise small numbers of hens to produce eggs. Montreal and Gatineau have approved similar programs in Quebec. While the specifics of each program varies, the intent is to allow urban dwellers to raise these small livestock animals in cities as a form of urban agriculture.

In Alberta, the City of Edmonton has already approved a pilot program for backyard chicken raising. In 2014, the city council voted in favour of implementing what it called an "Urban Hen Keeping Pilot Project" in partnership with River City Chickens Collective, a local urban agriculture advocacy group. The city selected nineteen sites where homeowners raised small numbers of hens under relatively strict animal control regulations. The pilot households had to register their animals with the province for identification and tracking. They also had to seek consent from their neighbours.[7]

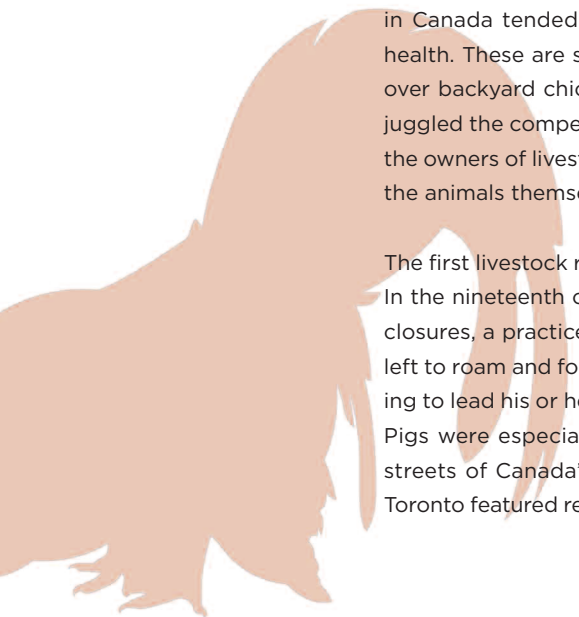
Throughout the first year of the project, the nineteen sites were subject to inspection by the city to ensure that the participants adhered to the guidelines and regulations. After a year, the Urban Hen Keeping Pilot Project submitted a summary report to the Community Services Committee outlining the success of its first phase. Over the course of one year, eighteen of the nineteen pilot sites were found to be compliant with city regulations or eventually became compliant by the end of the year (one household withdrew from the program over concerns about the mandatory run enclosure for the hens). Six of the pilot sites received a total of twelve animal control complaints. Animal control peace officers investigated all complaints and found that five complaints were in reference to nuisance birds feeding on food and waste, four focused on hens running at large off premises, two complaints were found concerning foul smells, and one complaint about noise. The pilot project's first year resulted in no concerns or complaints over coyotes or other predatory wildlife, and the report also failed to find any link between the size of a property or proximity to a neighbour as a cause of complaints. The Community Services Committee agreed to renew the project and approve its second phase with the expansion of test sites throughout the city.[8]

Of course, the raising of chickens and other livestock animals in Canadian cities is not a novel concept. Domestic livestock animals were once vital and common actors in urban life in Canada.[9] In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, livestock husbandry was

an ordinary part of life in cities. Most critically, livestock animals provided food and labour. The streetscapes of Toronto, Montreal, Winnipeg, Vancouver, and, yes, even Calgary once included cattle, pigs, chickens, and horses. Livestock weren't just "farm animals."

As municipal governments across the country continue to debate whether or not to permit chicken raising, they confront a regulatory challenge that was once commonplace and a central function of urban governance in the nineteenth century. Managing a growing urban environment that could accommodate livestock animals was one of the primary roles of municipal governments. In the nineteenth century, cities across Canada developed bylaws to regulate the use of livestock animals for a number of purposes. They passed bylaws to regulate the raising of animals for food and labour. They regulated the use of horses as a mode of transportation. They established and regulated public markets where live animals were sold and slaughtered. They also regulated butchers and slaughterhouses. They inspected milk quality at urban dairies. When livestock animals died, cities had to determine the procedures for the removal and disposal of animal carcasses. Municipal governments even had rules for how to remove the piles of manure that accumulated on the streets. In general, municipalities in the nineteenth century sought to establish rules and regulations that would allow for the efficient exploitation of livestock animals because those animals were necessary for the growth and development of cities.

When developing bylaws to govern livestock husbandry in cities, municipal governments in Canada tended to focus on two primary concerns: property relations and public health. These are some of the same concerns facing city councils today in the debate over backyard chickens. Through a series of different bylaws, municipal governments juggled the competing interests of a number of different parties, including landowners, the owners of livestock, pedestrians, streetcar companies, the general public health, and the animals themselves.



The first livestock regulatory challenge cities faced was the problem of animal trespass. In the nineteenth century, it was common for Canadians to raise livestock without enclosures, a practice known as free-range livestock husbandry. A cow or a pig could be left to roam and forage unattended. This saved the owner the time and expense of having to lead his or her animals to pasture or to supply the animals with expensive fodder. Pigs were especially talented independent foragers that found plenty to eat on the streets of Canada's growing cities. Most early bylaws in cities such as Montreal and Toronto featured restrictions on free-roaming pigs. Montreal had prohibited free-running

pigs as early as 1810.[10] Toronto similarly banned the unrestricted movement of pigs in the city in its earliest nuisance bylaw in 1834 but still ran into difficulty controlling the wily creatures. Throughout the 1830s, the city council in Toronto received numerous petitions signed by dozens of residents complaining of the problem of free-roaming pigs and cattle in the city.[11] These complaints compelled city governments to hire pound-keepers and establish city pounds for the capture of stray animals. In Montreal, the city empowered all police to impound stray livestock. In 1892, for instance, the Montreal police impounded more than 800 animals, including horses, sheep, cows, and pigs.[12]

Free-roaming animals caused a number of difficulties for Canada's industrial cities of the nineteenth century. They obstructed street traffic and blocked passage for residents on increasingly crowded sidewalks. In 1874, the *Daily Free Press* in Winnipeg complained of the streets being infested with pigs and other animals that made it difficult for residents to get around the city. It even noted the obstructions that stubborn pigs could cause by digging and burying themselves in the drains along the side of roads.[13]

More difficult, however, were the property conflicts livestock animals triggered with their free-roaming behaviour. Hungry cattle and pigs paid no mind to the private property boundaries of urban residents. They broke fences, wandered into gardens to feed on whatever they could find, and left their waste behind nearly everywhere they journeyed. In 1872, the *Toronto Mail* noted the continued difficulty residents faced in protecting their floral beds and grass plots from "the cravings of the never-to-be-satisfied porcine stomach."[14] In 1879, Richard Code, a property owner in Winnipeg, captured several horses and cattle that had destroyed the fence surrounding his market garden and eaten his produce. He petitioned the city council for compensation for the damage to his property. Livestock owners, however, could also lay claim to damage to their animals as a form of property. In the same year that Richard Code sought recompense for the damage to his market garden. Andrew Boyd, a milk dealer in Winnipeg, also sought compensation for the death of one of his cows that died as a result of eating garbage at the municipal nuisance ground where the city had failed to construct a fence around the growing pile of refuse.[15] Four petitioners in Toronto in 1883 successfully won cash payments from the city to make up for the loss of sheep to stray dogs.[16] The regulation of livestock in nineteenth-century urban environments balanced the property interests of landowners and livestock owners.

In addition to protecting property interests, municipal governments in nineteenth-century Canadian cities also sought to mitigate the potential harmful public health effects

Chickens in yard of Linton family home, Calgary, Alberta. 1913, Glenbow Archives, NA-5610-29, Calgary, AB.

of urban livestock husbandry. During a time when Canadians believed that foul-smelling airs could cause illness, animal waste and carcasses drew specific concern. Nineteenth-century public health bylaws in Canadian cities, therefore, often focused much attention on animal bodies and waste in an effort to protect public health. Early nuisance and public health bylaws in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, and Vancouver all attempted to address the problem of rotting animal carcasses that could be found in city streets. Daily city newspapers regularly kept track of the problem of animal carcasses. "A dead horse lies off Mill street in the common," noted the *Montreal Daily Witness* in September 1874.[17] To combat this problem, cities across Canada passed nuisance and public health bylaws requiring livestock owners to properly dispose of their dead animals. They also established municipal dumps and pits where residents could deposit dead animals, and prohibited the dumping of animal bodies in adjacent rivers and lakes. This was especially troublesome in Toronto and Winnipeg, where the Don and Red Rivers respectively could be found teeming with piles of dead horses, cattle, and pigs. In Winnipeg, the problem of animal carcasses was so severe in the 1880s that the city's public health officer complained that residents were failing to bury their dead animals, as required by the city's public health bylaw. Instead, they were dragging the bodies just beyond the city limits and abandoning them in a large pile that accumulated to more than 180 carcasses by 1883.[18] In Montreal, city police were responsible for disposing of abandoned animal carcasses. They handled hundreds of carcasses every year. For example, in 1887, the police found a record 119 dead horses in city streets.[19]

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, municipal governments started to use public health bylaws to significantly restrict urban livestock husbandry. Sanitary reformers and some urban residents began to raise concerns about the potential adverse health effects of keeping animals in the city. They also expressed aesthetic objections to the presence of livestock. This often reflected particular class and ethnic perceptions of the urban environment that worked against the economic interests of the working-class populations of Canadian cities. In Montreal, sanitary reformers and public health officials targeted pigs as a health risk to urban residents. In doing so, they directed their complaints at working-class French Canadian and Irish residents of the city who kept livestock to supplement family incomes and make ends meet. In 1865, the *Montreal Herald* complained about piggeries in Griffintown, an Irish immigrant and working-class district, where it claimed that the pigs were kept "in a most filthy condition, and highly injurious to health as well as offensive to the eye."[20] By 1874, Montreal outlawed the keeping of pigs in all parts of the city and by 1876 no person was permitted to keep a livestock animal within a house or tenement.

In Toronto, public health officials and sanitary reformers raised concerns over cattle byres or stables. Urban dairies were once a common amenity in Canadian cities, supplying fresh milk on a daily basis. By the 1870s, larger dairies and swill milk operations in Toronto drew negative public attention from nearby residents who complained of horrific smells and waste. The swill milk facilities of Gooderham and Worts at the mouth of the Don River and smaller cattle byres in other parts of the central city eventually led residents to pressure the council to ban cattle from the city.[21] In 1882, the city amended the nuisance bylaw to restrict the number of cattle that could be kept on an individual property, pushing all dairies to the fringes of the urban environment in Toronto.

By the late nineteenth century, Vancouver residents had taken aim at slaughterhouses. Beginning in 1887, the city council regulated the placement of slaughterhouses in the city with the intent of preventing such facilities from becoming a threat to the public health.[22] Property owners living near some of the city's earliest slaughterhouses, however, continuously complained to the city council of smells and other nuisances they believed threatened their health. For instance, in 1889, residents south of False Creek sent multiple petitions to the city council calling for the removal of nearby slaughterhouses. Within a year, the city passed a new bylaw prohibiting slaughterhouses from establishing within the city limits. The city closed a number of slaughterhouses and destroyed their animals in the process of moving slaughtering of live animals outside the city limits.[23]

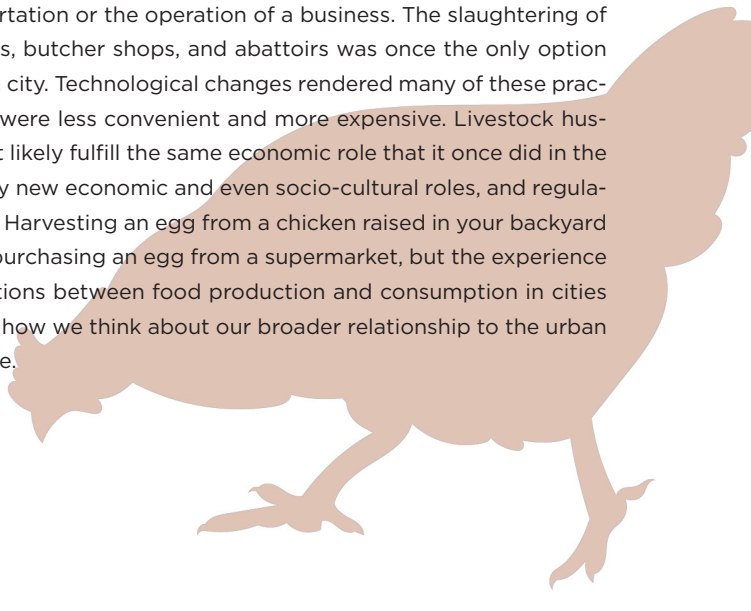
By the end of the nineteenth century, the examples of pigs in Montreal, cattle in Toronto, and slaughterhouses in Vancouver revealed an increasing discomfort among some Canadian urban dwellers with the presence of livestock in cities. To be sure, that discomfort was based on a combination of public health fears, class and ethnic bias, and aesthetic perceptions of the urban environment. By the early decades of the twentieth century, Canadians kept fewer large livestock animals in cities but continued to raise large numbers of small animals, such as chickens. In 1891, the census recorded 13,706 chickens in Vancouver, nearly one for each of the 13,709 people who lived in the city.[24] Large livestock animal owners certainly may have faced pressure from changing public health bylaws to remove their animals from the city, but they also faced practical pressures to abandon urban livestock husbandry as cities became more densely settled with people living in smaller spaces. Technological changes also contributed to the decline of urban livestock in cities. The electrification of street railways and the popularization of the automobile made the horse obsolete. Refrigeration technologies, railways, and the industrialization of dairying and meat packing contributed to the geographic displacement of cattle from cities as urban residents in Canada were drawn to the conven-

ience of purchasing milk and meat that was delivered to urban markets from adjacent rural areas. Canadians were not simply forced to stop raising animals in cities by changing bylaws. They also opted for the conveniences that further dissociated urban life from the visceral and sensory experiences of livestock husbandry.

What, then, can Canadians learn from the experiences of urban residents and livestock in the past? First, many of the regulatory challenges that cities faced concerning livestock are the same as those confronted by cities that have adopted backyard chicken programs today. The first report on the pilot project in Edmonton cited a number of concerns that nineteenth-century cities also faced: free-roaming animals, smells, waste, and public health concerns. Nineteenth-century urban livestock husbandry operated under municipal regulation to mitigate against property conflicts and adverse public health effects. Efforts to re-introduce urban livestock husbandry will likely also involve the establishment of a regulatory regime to accommodate chickens and other livestock animals.

Second, nineteenth-century urban livestock regulations did not take into consideration the interactions of livestock and wild animals. As the Edmonton pilot program found, there were no problems yet with predatory species. However, wild birds eating stray feed became a nuisance in the first year of the program. The growing population of wild urban animals, including raccoons, coyotes, and rats, raises new concerns over the effects of introducing livestock animals to urban environments in Canada.

Finally, livestock husbandry in the nineteenth century was, in many instances, a necessity of urban life. Raising a pig or a cow or a chicken helped to feed families. Keeping a horse was often critical for transportation or the operation of a business. The slaughtering of live animals at public markets, butcher shops, and abattoirs was once the only option for accessing fresh meats in a city. Technological changes rendered many of these practices obsolete because they were less convenient and more expensive. Livestock husbandry in cities today will not likely fulfill the same economic role that it once did in the nineteenth century. It will play new economic and even socio-cultural roles, and regulations will have to reflect that. Harvesting an egg from a chicken raised in your backyard may be costlier than simply purchasing an egg from a supermarket, but the experience of developing direct connections between food production and consumption in cities may have positive effects on how we think about our broader relationship to the urban environments in which we live.



James C. Linton feeding chickens in yard of Linton family home, Calgary, Alberta, 1913, Glenbow Archives, NA-5610-30, Calgary, AB.