

Aloha, I testified at the first reading of Bill #1 to voice my support and ask the council to expand the bill to allow for goats in typical urban residential lots. Unfortunately, I cannot get coverage in my class again for the first committee meeting, so I would like to submit written testimony in support of the bill, with additional amendments to allow it to fully live up to its potential to allow for a more sustainable residential legislation relating to the keeping of animals.

The purpose of the bill as it is currently presented-- to promote food sustainability and provide standards for the keeping of animals— needs to go further than simply increasing the number of chickens to truly meet its charge. I would like to suggest the council apply the same logic it uses to include and determine the number animals such as dogs, to other animals, especially animals that would allow for residents to independently produce more food for their families, since that is the purpose of the bill being considered today. Specifically, I would like the council to allow for goats, with appropriate restrictions, to provide residents with greater opportunities for food sustainability and animal companionship.

I'd like to propose that the council remove goats, especially dwarf, miniature, and pygmy varieties of goats from the farm animal list; under the current proposal these animals are excluded from any property under two acres, due to the necessity of keeping all farm structures 300 feet from any property line. Under our current law, animals such as chickens and bees have been given appropriate amendments and restrictions to make them viable parts of our urban and suburban landscapes, and similar restrictions could be drafted to allow for the inclusion of goats in this bill.

The mis-information about goats in the general public leads many people to consider them smelly, noisy animals, but in fact, most goats (with the exception of uncastrated males), when kept in the company of at least one other goat to provide companionship, have minimal impact on their surroundings both in terms of noise and in the waste they produce. In the last decade, many cities across the country--from urban environments such as Chicago and Seattle to progressive communities such as Austin and Portland-- have successfully passed laws to allow for the inclusion of dairy goat does and whethers (castrated males) in urban and suburban environments. These goats are not smelly (unlike bucks, or uncastrated males, which have earned goats such smelly reputations), they eat invasive plants, and provide delicious milk along with their companionship. Goats, especially miniature, dwarf and pigmy varieties, are more and more commonly kept as pets and as members of sustainable urban homesteads.

I hope that the city council will build upon the logic of the proposed bill by allowing for animals that would have no more additional environmental impact than currently allowed animals, and include goats with the appropriate restrictions, such as made for chickens and bees under the current law. I hope that in considering the bill today, that the members of this committee will continue to educate themselves about the viability of truly making this bill one that supports a sustainable food system in Hawaii's urban environments.

Mahalo,
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