

# Right-to-Farm vs. Backyard Farm Animals

## What's the difference?

### What is Right-to-Farm?

Right to Farm bylaws are meant to provide commercial farmers with protection from nuisance litigation and restrictions that could adversely impact agriculture.

### History of Right-to-Farm

Right-to-Farm laws began in the 1970's as a response to the rapid development that is and has been increasingly encroaching into America's farmlands. As urbanization swelled, and suburban developments converted once picturesque rolling hills into homogenized cul-de-sacs, many family farms paid the price. New residents who were unfamiliar with lifestyles in once rural areas would soon bring noise, dust, odor and other nuisance complaints against farmers who pre-dated the newly developed neighborhoods. Many family farms were unable to compete monetarily against the lawsuits and litigation they faced for their normal farming practices. In addition to driving out existing farms, anti-farm legislation and restrictions also prevented younger and newer farmers from entering the agrarian industry or continuing a family tradition. Once vibrant and active farmlands would slowly become vacant and overgrown, until ultimately becoming sub-divided and paved. By 2015, all 50 states in the United States have passed some variant of Right-to-Farm legislation.

### West Boylston Right-to-Farm

On October 20, 2008, at a semi-annual town meeting, town residents of West Boylston voted to create an Agricultural Commission. One of the first acts of the Commission was to make the town a Right-to-Farm community. This would ensure the protection of commercial farming in West Boylston against complaints, lawsuits and litigation for normal farming practices.

### Backyard Farm Animals

While West Boylston's Right-to-Farm bylaws were established for commercial farming, the West Boylston Agricultural Commission seeks to promote and protect agriculture on any scale, regardless of commerce. Although West Boylston has a rich rural history and vast open space compared to other bordering Worcester towns, our town is also home to a few dense neighborhoods. West Boylston currently has no restrictions on general farming practices, including lot size. Therefore, in an effort allow all residents to participate freely in the joys of agriculture, it is incumbent upon all who engage in this lifestyle to proactively and continuously exhibit mindful and considerate farming practices. Residents keeping farm animals on smaller lot sizes are encouraged to pay extra attention to these matters. Guidelines, suggestions and recommendations on positive farming practices are available through the Agricultural Commission.