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Measure would limit roosters in parts of California city

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RIVERSIDE, Calif. — Rooster owners in this Southern California city may be about to get their feathers ruffled.

Measure A on Tuesday's ballot seeks to muffle incessant cock-a-doodle-dooing and curb cockfighting by limiting the number of roosters residents can own in rural areas.

"It just goes from about 3 o'clock in the morning to 8 or 9 o'clock at night," said Lee Scheffers, who said his neighbors had up to 200 roosters at one time. "There's just a lot of crowing going on. Every one is more macho than the other one."

After he complained to the City Council, code enforcement officers took action — but not until Scheffers had lost a lot of sleep.

The current law allows 50 birds, but the measure would only allow seven and require the birds be confined to an "acoustical structure" at least 100 feet from neighbors from sunrise to sunset.

If the measure passes, those with too many roosters would have to trim their flocks.

City officials have recorded more than 100 noise complaints and last year discovered a cockfighting ring with more than 200 roosters, said Ed Adkison, a former councilman who proposed the measure.

Riverside County has strict laws limiting rooster ownership, which had driven illegal cockfighting operations into the city, particularly in rural areas of citrus groves, nurseries and ranches where local law mandates no more than one house per five-acre lot.

"It's a real quality of life issue, but it's also an animal cruelty issue," said Councilman Chris Mac Arthur, who said the measure is also aimed at stopping cockfighting.

Mac Arthur, a Riverside native, said he favors the measure although it won't have a direct impact on him. The measure needs a simple majority to pass.

"I've lived in this area most of my life, but I do not have any crowing fowl — or any fowl to speak of," he said.

Adkison said he may host a "rooster wing" party at his house if the measure passes.

"We'll probably just end up buying regular chicken wings and pretend they're roosters," he admitted. "It's a serious issue but I've been trying to have fun with it. Now when I go out, I'm known as 'The Chicken Guy.'"

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