

Miami Beach's plucky rooster Mr. Clucky loses code fight

BY LARRY LEBOWITZ
LLEBOWITZ@MIAMIHERALD.COM

Round One in the battle between the rooster and the state goes to The Man.

Mr. Clucky, the most famous rooster on Miami Beach, is no longer welcome to live in a South Beach studio apartment with his passionate handyman-carpenter-cum-activist owner Mark Buckley.

A special hearing officer ordered Buckley on Thursday to pay a \$50 fine and gave city code officers the authority to remove Mr. Clucky and his publicity-shy hen girlfriend, Wallflower, from Buckley's first-floor condo on Jefferson Avenue.

The city codes prohibit the stabling of poultry and other livestock in residential areas. Buckley, a vegetarian for 39 years, says Mr. Clucky and Wallflower are not animals being raised for food or profit. They are, he says, domesticated pets who have better lives, with cleaner conditions, than most factory farmed fowl.

Mr. Clucky has become a minor celebrity, squired around Lincoln Road mall and at various coffee shops and bars on South Beach on the handlebars of Buckley's bicycle.

Buckley claims Mr. Clucky is the victim of vengeful neighbors anonymously complaining to overzealous officers of the state.

Special Master Joe Kaplan encouraged Buckley to consider asking the City Commission to grant a special exception to the current codes. He could also appeal to the courts.

After the hearing, Buckley said he isn't expecting a SWAT team to storm his apartment and take his rescued birds anytime soon.

Kaplan told Buckley he wasn't going to let Mr. Clucky testify.

``But he's Exhibit A," Buckley pleaded. ``The nature of my bird is the No. 1 witness in this case."

``That the rooster is going to be a witness is not going to sit well with me," Kaplan responded.

Buckley's sister, Andrea, carried Mr. Clucky out of the City Commission chambers. Loud cries occasionally disrupted the proceedings, eliciting chuckles from the atypically large audience for code-enforcement violation hearing day.

``He wishes I was out there," Buckley said. ``My rooster wants his second breakfast."