

Department of Permitting and Environmental Review (Permitting)

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Small Animals and Livestock

Permitting Customer
Information Bulletin #**41A****• FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS •**

*Visit the Permitting Web site at
www.kingcounty.gov/permits
for more information*

King County Permitting has created customer information bulletins to inform the general public about the effect of codes and regulations on their projects. These bulletins are not intended to be complete statements of all laws and rules and should not be used as substitutes for them. If conflicts and questions arise, current codes and regulations are final authority. Because the codes and regulations may be revised or amended at any time, consult King County staff to be sure you understand all requirements before beginning work. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the project meets all requirements of applicable codes and regulations.

For alternate formats, call 206-296-6600.

Chapter 11.04 and Chapter 21A.30 of the King County Code (KCC) regulate the raising, breeding, and/or fee boarding of small animals or livestock in King County. These activities are considered to be an accessory use, which means that they are not the main uses of the property. The intent of KCC Chapter 21A.30 is to enhance and preserve the compatibility among neighboring properties by regulating the scope and intensity of accessory uses or activities. The regulations in KCC Chapter 21A.30 regarding small animals and livestock are discussed throughout this bulletin. The KCC is online at www.kingcounty.gov/council/legislation/kc_code.aspx.

Note: At the end of this bulletin, definitions from the current KCC are given for the following:

- Cattery
- Household Pets
- Small Animal
- Kennel
- Livestock
- Small Livestock
- Large Livestock

Please see KCC 21A.08.090 to find out if you can raise livestock or small animals on your property. You need to know the zoning designation of your property.

Small animal regulations [See Chapter 21A.30.020 of the King County Code]

I. Small animals kept indoors

- A. Those kept indoors as household pets in aquariums, terrariums, cages, or similar containers are not limited in numbers, except as provided in Chapter 11.04 of the KCC.
- B. The number of cats kept indoors is not limited.
- C. Other small animals (excluding cats kept indoors) are limited to five, of which not more than three may be unaltered cats or dogs.

II. Small animals kept outdoors

- A. The number of small animals kept outdoors as household pets, including cats and dogs, is limited to the following:
 1. Three per household on lots less than 20,000 square feet;
 2. Five per household on lots of 20,000 to 35,000 square feet; and
 3. An additional two per acre on lots more than 35,000 square feet, with a maximum of 20 animals.
- B. All unaltered animals kept outdoors must be kept on a leash or in a confined area, except as authorized for a hobby kennel or cattery or commercial kennel or cattery, as provided in Chapter 11.04 of the KCC.
- C. When animals considered as household pets are kept for commercial breeding, boarding or training, they must meet the regulations described in Item D, following.
- D. Small animals and household pets kept as an accessory use outside the dwelling must be raised, kept, or bred only as an accessory use on the premises of the owner, or in a kennel or cattery approved through the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) process.

Animals that fall into this category must meet the following standards:

1. Birds must be kept in an aviary or loft which meets the provisions described below:
 - a. The aviary or loft must provide the following:
 - One-half square foot for each parakeet, canary, or similar size bird;
 - One square foot for each pigeon, small parrot, or similar size bird; and
 - Two square feet for each large parrot, macaw, or similar size bird.
 - b. Aviaries or lofts must not exceed 2,000 square feet (except in Rural Forestry or Agricultural Zones).
 - c. The setback for the aviary must be at least ten feet from any property line and 20 feet from any dwelling unit.
2. Small animals other than birds must meet the following standards:
 - a. The minimum site area must be a half acre if more than three small animals are being kept;
 - b. All animals must be confined within a building, pen, aviary, or similar structure; and
 - c. The setback for any covered house or similar structure must be at least ten feet from any property line (except structures used to house mink and fox, for which the distance must be at least 105 feet).
3. Poultry, chickens, squab, rabbits, hamsters, nutria, and chinchilla are limited to a maximum of one animal per square foot of structure used to house such animals, up to a maximum of 2,000 square feet.

Note: This maximum structure size limit does not apply to Rural, Forestry, or Agricultural Zones.

4. Mink and fox are permitted only on sites with a minimum area of five acres.
5. Beekeeping must meet the following standards:
 - a. Beehives are limited to 50 on sites less than five acres;
 - b. The number of beehives is not limited on sites of five or more acres;
 - c. Colonies must be maintained in movable-frame hives at all times;
 - d. Adequate space must be provided in each hive to prevent overcrowding and swarming;
 - e. Colonies must be requeened following any swarming or aggressive behavior;
 - f. Colonies must be registered with the County Extension Agent before April 1 of each year, on a State Registration Form acceptable to King County; and

- g. Abandoned colonies, diseased bees, or bees living in trees, buildings, or any other space except in movable-frame hives are considered a public nuisance. They are subject to abatement, as set forth in the enforcement chapter of the current KCC. [See Chapter 21A.50 of the KCC.]
- E. Kennels and catteries must meet the following requirements:
 - 1. Kennels located in Residential Zones:
 - The minimum site area is five acres; and
 - The setbacks for structures housing animals and outdoor animal runs must be a minimum distance of 100 feet from property lines abutting Residential zones.
 - 2. For kennels located in Non-Residential Zones:
 - Run areas must be completely surrounded by an eight-foot solid wall or fence; and
 - Kennels must meet the requirements stated in Chapter 11.04.060 of the KCC, Livestock Management Standards, as described under the Title of Livestock Regulations later in this bulletin.
 - 3. Catteries must meet the following standards:
 - They must be on sites of 35,000 square feet or more; and
 - Buildings used to house cats must be a minimum distance of 50 feet from property lines abutting Residential Zones.

Animal regulations–livestock–densities [See Chapter 21A.30.040 of the KCC]

- I. The minimum site used to accommodate large livestock is 20,000 square feet. The portion of the total site area used for confinement or grazing may be less than 20,000 square feet but must meet the requirements in the section.
- II. The maximum number of livestock allowed is as follows:
 - A. For commercial dairy farms, the number is regulated by the Washington State Department of Ecology's NPDES System, either through a general or a special permit;
 - B. For stables with covered arenas, for which farm management plans are implemented and maintained such that pasture and paddock use does not exceed the equivalent of three animals per acre on a full-time basis, up to six resident horses per acre;

Note: Higher densities may be allowed if a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) is approved.
 - C. For all large livestock not covered by sections A and B above, the number is three horses, cows, or similar-size animals per gross acre of total site area. In figuring the number of livestock, two ponies are equivalent to one horse, and miniature horses are treated as small livestock. (See Section E, below.) A farm management plan must be implemented and maintained, or all Livestock Management Standards of Chapter 21A.30.060 of the KCC, outlined below, must be met;
 - D. If the standards mentioned in II.C above are not met, then one horse, cow, or similar-size animal (excluding any young animals under six months of age) is allowed per two acres of fenced grazing area; and
 - E. For small livestock, five of each or any combination (excluding sucklings) are allowed per one acre of fenced pasturage, or per ½ acre of total site area. The Livestock Management Standards in Chapter 21A.30.060 of the KCC (described on the following page) must be met.

Livestock management standards [See Chapter 21A.30.060 of the KCC]

As an alternative to a farm management plan, any property owner may implement the following management standards for any site that is used, or proposed to be used, to accommodate large livestock at densities greater than one animal per two acres and small livestock at densities greater than five per acre.

- I. Livestock access to streams and their buffers
 - A. Access is limited to stream crossing and water points that have been addressed in a crossing plan or watering point designed to SCS/KCD specifications. The specifications prevent free access along the length of the stream.
 - B. Fencing must be used, as necessary, to prevent livestock access to streams.
 - C. Bridges may be used instead of stream crossings, provided that piers and abutments are not placed within the ordinary high water mark or top-of-bank, whichever is greater. The following also applies to bridges:
 1. Bridges must be designed to allow free flow of floodwaters and must not diminish the floodcarrying capacity of the stream.
 2. Bridges may be placed without a County permit. However, with regard to such a permit waiver, King County will neither assume liability for such a bridge or its placement, nor will it grant a waiver from other required agency permits.
- II. Grazing areas not covered by Chapter 21A.24 of the KCC must maintain a vegetative buffer of 25 feet from:
 - A. Any naturally occurring pond;
 - B. Any wetland edge of a Class I or II wetland (except those wetlands meeting the definition of grazed wet meadows); and
 - C. The ordinary high water mark of a Type S or F aquatic area.

Animal definitions – [See Chapter 21A.06 of the KCC]

KCC 21A.06.065 Animal, Small: Any animal, other than livestock or animals considered to be predatory or wild which are kept outside a dwelling unit all or part of the time. Animals considered predatory or wild, excluding those in zoo animal breeding facilities, shall be considered small animals when they are taken into captivity for the purposes of breeding, domestication, training, hunting, or exhibition.

KCC 21A.06.175 Cattery: A place where adult cats are temporarily boarded for compensation, whether or not for training. An adult cat is of either sex, altered or unaltered, that has reached the age of six months.

KCC 21A.06.615 Household Pets: Small animals that are kept within a dwelling unit.

KCC 21A.06.660 Kenel: A place where adult dogs are temporarily boarded for compensation, whether or not for training. An adult dog is one of either sex, altered or unaltered, that has reached the age of six months.

KCC 21A.06.695 Livestock: Grazing animals kept either in open fields or structures for training, boarding, home use, sales, or breeding and production, including but not limited to the following:

- A. Cattle;
- B. Riding and draft horses;
- C. Hogs, excluding pigs weighing under 120 pounds and standing 20 inches or less at the shoulder, which are kept as pets or small animals;
- D. Sheep; and/or
- E. Goats.

KCC 21A.06.700 Livestock, Large: Cattle, horses, and other livestock generally weighing over 500 pounds.

KCC 21A.06.705 Livestock, Small: Hogs, excluding pigs weighing under 120 pounds and standing 20 inches or less at the shoulder, which are kept as household pets or small animals, sheep, goats, miniature horses, llamas, alpaca, and other livestock generally weighing under 500 pounds.

Also see the Critical Areas Summaries on specific critical areas (i.e., wetlands or streams) that are available at Permitting, and the King County Livestock Management Ordinance, available through King County. More information is available from the Permitting Web site at www.kingcounty.gov/permits, by calling Permitting Services Center at 206-296-6600, and in the Permitting Services Center in Snoqualmie, WA.

Be sure to visit our Web site at:
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King County complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If you require an accommodation to attend a meeting (two weeks' notice) or require this information in Braille, audiocassette, or large print, please call 206-296-6600 or TTY 206-296-7217.