

Keeping of Animals

The Zoning Ordinance regulates the types of animals are permitted to be kept on a lot, how many are allowed, the lot size required, and the setbacks for associated structures.

Per [subsection 4102.7.J](#), the keeping of animals is allowed as an accessory use on any lot if the animals are not for commercial purposes such as breeding, boarding, or any other activity that meets the definition of a [kennel](#).

DOGS AND OTHER COMPANION ANIMALS

Dogs six months and older have lot size and number regulations. There are no lot sizes or maximum numbers for other types of [companion animals](#), such as cats, rabbits, or other animals not listed.

Maximum Number	Minimum Lot Size
2	No requirement
3	10,000 square feet
4	12,500 square feet
6	20,000 square feet
More than 6	25,000 square feet plus 5,000 square feet for each dog above 7

LIVESTOCK OR FOWL

The keeping of livestock or fowl is also permitted on lots containing at least two acres. Horses (which also includes ponies, mules, burros, and donkeys) less than six months old, livestock less than one year old, and fowl less than two months old are excluded from this count. One animal unit is permitted per acre.

The following numbers are equal to one animal/bird unit:

Animal	Number
Alpacas	5
Cattle	2
Chickens*	32
Ducks	16
Geese	8
Goats	5
Horses	3
Llamas	5
Ostriches or emus	2
Sheep	5
Swine	5
Turkeys	8



* Roosters are only permitted in conjunction with agriculture on lots seven acres or larger

OTHER ANIMALS

- The keeping of honeybees in four beehives or less are permitted on any lot, and more than four beehives are allowed if the lot is 10,000 SF or larger. A water source is required within 50 feet of the hives, and if the main entrance of the hive faces and is within ten feet of any lot line, there must be a flight path barrier (fence, structure, or plantings) at least six feet in height, located in front of the hive. These regulations do not apply to solitary bees or their structures (which are regulated as freestanding accessory structures).
- Racing, homing, or exhibition (fancy) pigeons are allowed on lots 10,000 SF or larger.

WILD OR EXOTIC

Animals considered wild or exotic under [Chapter 41.1 of the County Code](#) are not permitted. Please contact the Animal Protection Police at (703) 324-0222 for any questions relating to wild or exotic animals.

PET SITTING

Up to four companion animals not owned by the resident are also permitted to be sheltered, fed, and watered for a fee in a dwelling; if caring for dogs, the total number (including those owned by the resident) must meet the dog unit limitations in the table above. This standard allows for accessory pet sitting services such as Rover, DogVacay, and Fetch, without the need for a special exception. A resident may submit a special permit application to the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) to request an increase in the number of dogs permitted on a lot under the dog unit limitations above for dogs owned by the resident, but the BZA may not approve more than four dogs not owned by the resident (as this would be considered a kennel or animal shelter).

LOCATION REGULATIONS

All structures associated with the keeping of animals have specific location regulations based on structure type. The following regulations apply:

- Agricultural barns and other structures for livestock or poultry (excluding horses and ponies) must be at least 100 feet from any lot line. If not used for agriculture, these structures must be at least 50 feet from any lot line.
- Barns and other structures for horses and ponies must be at least 40 feet from a front or side lot line and 20 feet from a rear lot line.
- Cages, lofts, hives, pens, and other similar structures that are 8.5 feet in height or less for pigeons or honeybees must be at least three feet from any lot line. Any of these structures exceeding 8.5 feet is subject to the freestanding accessory structure regulations (subsection 4102.7.A).
- Doghouses, runs, pens, rabbit hutches, cages, and other similar structures for dogs and other companion animals must meet the accessory structure regulations. A structure, run, or pen for three or more dogs must be at least 25 feet from any lot line.

SPECIAL PERMIT OPTIONS

The BZA may approve a special permit for the keeping of animals in greater numbers or on smaller lot sizes, or the modification of location regulations for the structures housing animals. The BZA may not approve a special permit for a rooster. Standards are included in subsection 4102.7.J.

Questions?

If you have any questions about the keeping of animal provisions, please contact the Zoning Administration Division at 703-324-1314 (TTY 711) or send an email to ORDAdmin@fairfaxcounty.gov

Complaints?

To report a possible violation, please contact the Department of Code Compliance at 703-324-1300 (TTY 711) or send an email to DCCCodeComplianceE-mail@fairfaxcounty.gov

