

Keeping of Animals

The Zoning Ordinance regulates what types of animals are permitted, how many are allowed, lot size, and setbacks for associated structures.

COMMONLY ACCEPTED PETS

On any lot, commonly accepted pets used for personal enjoyment and not for commercial purposes are permitted ([Section 2-512](#)). A commonly accepted pet is defined in [Article 20](#) as “any of the following animals that have been bred or raised to live in the habitation of humans, and are dependent upon the same for food and shelter: rabbits; hedgehogs; chinchillas; hermit crabs; hamsters; ferrets; gerbils; guinea pigs; mice; rats; turtles; fish; dogs; cats; domestic chickens, ducks and geese under two months old; birds such as canaries, parakeets, doves and parrots; worm/ant farms; chameleons and similar lizards; and spiders and snakes not venomous to people.”



Dogs older than six months have lot size and number regulations. There are not lot sizes or maximum numbers for other types of commonly accepted pets.

Number of Dogs	Required Lot Size
1 – 2	No requirement
3 – 4	12,500 SF
5 – 6	20,000 SF
7 or more	25,000 SF + 5,000 SF per dog above 7

LIVESTOCK OR FOWL

The keeping of livestock or fowl is also permitted on lots containing at least two acres. Horses 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
Chickens*	32
Ducks	16
Geese	8
Goats	5
Head of Cattle	2
Horses	3
Llamas	5
Sheep	5
Swine	5
Turkeys	8



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

OTHER ANIMALS

- Four beehives 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 any landing platform facing and within 10 feet of a lot line requires a six-foot tall fence, structure, or planting flight path barrier in front of the hive.
- 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.

LOCATION REGULATIONS

All structures associated with the keeping of animals have specific location regulations based on structure type. The following regulations from Part 9 of [Section 10-104](#) apply:

- Agricultural barns and other structures for poultry or livestock (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 seven feet in height or less for pigeons or bees must be at least three feet from any lot line. Any of these structures exceeding seven feet is subject to the accessory structure regulations (Part 12 of [Section 10-104](#)).
- Doghouses, runs, pens, rabbit hutches, cages, and other similar structures for dogs and other commonly accepted pets must meet the accessory structure regulations. A structure, run, or pen for three dogs must be at least 25 feet from any lot line.

SPECIAL PERMIT OPTIONS

The BZA may approve a special permit for pets that are not considered commonly accepted (but are not considered wild or exotic), the keeping of animals in greater numbers or on smaller lot sizes, or modification of location regulations. The BZA may not approve a special permit for a rooster on a lot smaller than five acres. Standards are included in [Section 8-917](#).

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

