

FAQs about City Chickens

Our frequently asked questions about raising chickens in the city.

What does the city of Seattle allow? Are other cities similar?

The City of Seattle allows 3 chickens per standard lot, with an additional 1 bird allowed per additional 1,000 sq. ft. Many other cities are similar. Some allow less, some allow more, and some prohibit chickens. A homeowner should contact the appropriate zoning and land use department before attempting this venture so that all rules and regulations are understood.

Are chickens dirty?

That depends. As with any animal (and people), chickens can be “dirty” if they are not properly cared for. A chicken that is properly cared for is just as clean as a dog or house bird.

Are roosters the noisy ones, or are hens noisy too?

Roosters are noisy. Hens are much less so. A hen will cackle at times during the day, and will occasionally (especially when disturbed by an unfamiliar person or animal) squawk, but she will be quiet most of the time. She will be completely silent when it is dark, as she will be sleeping. Many hens will cackle while they are laying their eggs, but these, and most other sounds, are not very loud, and are certainly quieter than most everything else that occurs in the surrounding neighborhood. The only time where such sounds may be unpleasant is in the early morning, at times when neighbors may want to sleep late. To counteract this, many chicken owners will keep the coops dark on those days until later in the morning, or ply neighbors with fresh eggs.

How many eggs does one hen lay per day? Or per week?

The answer will vary depending on 1) The time of year, 2) The breed of the hen, 3) The diet of the hen, 4) The age of the hen, and 5) Other husbandry practices. Most of the standard breeds of chickens that have been selected through the years for egg production will lay between 180 – 320 eggs per year for their first year of laying. On one extreme, there are records of hens averaging an egg a day for over a year. The rate of laying tapers in the second year and beyond, until it may only take place during the spring. Some of the breeds that haven't been selected for egg production (selected for show, or other qualities, instead) may only lay eggs in the spring and early summer. Appropriate feed mixtures also stimulate egg production.

Should you have more than one hen?

Yes. Chickens have a strong social structure.

Do you have to have a rooster for a hen to lay eggs?

No. Without a rooster, hens will still lay eggs. There are no roosters to be found at all the mega-farms, where most eggs come from. If you don't have a rooster, the eggs can't be fertile, and won't hatch. However, this is not the goal of most chicken owners. And, non-fertile eggs are (arguably) just as nutritious and tasty as fertile eggs.

Can they run around your yard? Do you need to keep them fenced in?

They can run around your yard, but care must be taken to protect them from predators. Therefore, they should be securely fenced in most of the time, especially during non-daylight hours. If they are not fenced in during the day, they may wander too far and leave the property, inviting attacks from dogs and other animals.

How long do they lay eggs before they become non-laying hens?

As mentioned above, productivity diminishes after the first year. It is still good the second year, but then declines rapidly. At about three or four years, production is not very efficient. Most commercial and farm hens are culled after their second season of laying.

Can you bring them in your house?

Yes, if you want. They are harder to "potty train" than most animals, though. They defecate more often than mammals. However, some people do keep their "pet" chickens in their house.

How do you deal with excrement?

It makes excellent compost, especially when combined with materials high in Carbon. Many of the materials used for litter in the chicken yard/house (such as shavings, straw, and sawdust) are high in Carbon, making the mixture of chicken manure (high in Nitrogen) and litter a balanced ingredient for a compost pile.

Will they eat slugs?

A chicken will eat almost anything that doesn't eat it first. So, yes, they will eat slugs. Or, they may just "shred" them by their "pecking and scratching" action, thus killing them.

Will they eat too many of the earthworms?

They might, but it is unlikely. Their instinct is to forage for a variety of menu items. They will eat too many earthworms if there is an ample supply, but they won't eat any more than other animals would.

Come to the City Chickens Classes to learn more!

Document Actions

Chapter 7.08
LIVESTOCK, SMALL ANIMALS
AND FOWL

Sections:

- 7.08.010 Chapter compliance required
- 7.08.020 Livestock defined
- 7.08.030 Small animals and fowl defined
- 7.08.040 Chinchillas, guinea pigs, hamsters, parakeets, and pigeons
- 7.08.050 Rabbits, chickens, geese, ducks and turkeys
- 7.08.060 Enclosure construction
- 7.08.070 Number of livestock allowed
- 7.08.080 Maintaining horses, cattle, sheep and goats within City limits
- 7.08.090 Maintaining swine within city limits
- 7.08.100 Minimum area for keeping
- 7.08.110 Number of animals per area size
- 7.08.120 Distance from human habitation
- 7.08.130 One building per site for housing
- 7.08.140 Nuisance prohibited
- 7.08.150 Manure removal
- 7.08.160 Enforcement
- 7.08.170 Issuance of permits for housing
- 7.08.180 Exemptions

7.08.010 Chapter compliance required

It is unlawful for any person, persons, firm or corporation to keep or maintain livestock, small animals or fowl within the City limits, except as provided in this chapter.

(Ord. 232 §1, 1956)

7.08.020 Livestock defined

"Livestock," where used in this chapter, means and includes horses, cattle, sheep, goats and swine.

(Ord. 232 §2, 1956)

7.08.030 Small animals and fowl defined

"Small animals and fowl," where used in this chapter mean rabbits, chinchillas, guinea pigs, hamsters, chickens, geese, ducks, turkeys, parakeets and pigeons.

(Ord. 232 §3(part), 1956)

7.08.040 Chinchillas, guinea pigs, hamsters, parakeets and pigeons

Chinchillas, guinea pigs, hamsters, parakeets and pigeons will be permitted in numbers as approved by the health officer.

(Ord. 232 §3(a), 1956)

7.08.050 Rabbits, chickens, geese, ducks and turkeys

Rabbits, chickens, geese, ducks and turkeys will be permitted in numbers as defined in TMC 7.08.110.

(Ord. 232 §3(b), 1956)

7.08.060 Enclosure construction

All livestock, small animals and fowl shall be kept within an enclosure adequately built and maintained to prevent the livestock, small animals and fowl from breaking through, out, over or under the same. All pens, coops, hutches and housing of any kind used for the housing of livestock, small animals and fowl must be built to include siding or shakes or their equivalent, and must be painted or stained to appear presentable.

(Ord. 232 §4, 1956)

7.08.070 Number of livestock allowed

The number of horses, cows or cattle, sheep, goats or swine allowed on any given piece or parcel of property shall be regulated by the duly appointed health officer of the City.

(Ord. 232 §5, 1956)

7.08.080 Maintaining horses, cattle, sheep and goats within City limits

All livestock, except swine, may be kept or maintained within the city limits, provided they are kept not less than 100 feet from the nearest residence.

(Ord. 232 §6, 1956)

7.08.090 Maintaining swine within City limits

Swine may be kept or maintained within the City limits provided they are kept within an enclosure as herein described, the outside limits of which shall be not less than 200 feet from the nearest residence.

(Ord. 232 §7, 1956)

7.08.100 Minimum area for keeping

No livestock, small animals or fowl shall be kept on any property within the City limits where the property does not contain a minimum of 10,000 square feet of area.

(Ord. 232 §8, 1956)

7.08.110 Number of animals per area size

Small animals and fowl shall be permitted as follows:

1. Twelve chickens or twelve rabbits or any combination of chickens and rabbits, not to exceed a total of twelve collectively, for 10,000 square feet of property;
2. The number of chickens or rabbits may be increased by 1/10th for each additional 1,000 square feet of property;

3. Six geese, six ducks, six turkeys or any combination of geese, ducks or turkeys, not to exceed a total of six collectively for 10,000 square feet of property;

4. The number of geese, ducks or turkeys may be increased 1/10th for each additional 1,000 square feet of property;

5. At no time shall the total number of small animals or fowl exceed a total of twelve for each 10,000 square feet of property.

(Ord. 232 §9, 1956)

7.08.120 Distance from human habitation

Buildings for the housing of small animals and fowl shall be built and located not less than 65 feet from any place of human habitation, other than the owner's, or not less than 20 feet from the adjoining property; and providing further that the roaming area for the small animals and fowl shall be fenced and located not less than 35 feet from any adjacent place of human habitation.

(Ord. 232 §10, 1956)

7.08.130 One building per site for housing

Not more than one building for the housing of livestock, small animals or fowl shall be allowed in any one building site.

(Ord. 232 §11, 1956)

7.08.140 Nuisance prohibited

No livestock, small animals or fowl shall be kept in such a manner that a condition resulting from same shall constitute a nuisance.

(Ord. 232 §12, 1956)

7.08.150 Manure removal

All manure must be kept in a covered water-tight pit or chamber and shall be removed at least once a week during the period from April 1 to October 1, and during the other months at intervals sufficiently frequent to maintain a sanitary condition satisfactory to the health officer:

1. Manure shall not be allowed to collect in any place where it can prejudicially affect any source of drinking water.

2. Manure, when used as a fertilizer, must be plowed or spaded under within 24 hours after application.

(Ord. 232 §13, 1956)

7.08.160 Enforcement

The health officer for the City shall be authorized to enforce this chapter, unless otherwise provided.

(Ord. 232 §14, 1956)

7.08.170 Issuance of permits for housing

The building superintendent shall issue all permits for housing livestock, small animals and fowl. Buildings must be completed, including manure pit, within 60 days after issuance of permit.

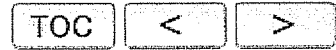
(Ord. 232 §15, 1956)

7.08.180 Exemptions

A. Any person, persons, firm or corporation who, on January 3, 1956 are keeping livestock, small animals or fowl within the City limits, will not be affected by TMC 7.08.070, 7.08.080, 7.08.090, 7.08.100, 7.08.110 and 7.08.120.

B. Any person, persons, firm or corporation who discontinues the keeping or reduces the number of livestock, small animals or fowl for a period of more than 90 days, or who sells or transfers his property, shall then become subject to all the provisions of this chapter.

(Ord. 232 §16, 1956)



Chapter 17.35 ANIMALS

Sections:

- 17.35.010 Purpose.
- 17.35.020 Definitions.
- 17.35.030 Keeping of domesticated animals in residential zones.
- 17.35.040 Keeping of poultry and covered animals in residential zones.

17.35.010 Purpose.

The city council finds and declares that the city of Edmonds is a developed urban community of primarily residential character. The purpose of this chapter is to reasonably regulate the owning and keeping of animals in a manner to promote and protect the urban residential character of the city. [Ord. 3343 § 1, 2001].

17.35.020 Definitions.

For purposes of this chapter, the definitions set forth in ECC 5.05.010 shall apply unless modified herein. [Ord. 3343 § 1, 2001].

17.35.030 Keeping of domesticated animals in residential zones.

For each residential dwelling unit, regardless of the number of occupants residing within such dwelling unit, the following maximum number of domestic animals may be kept or owned within the dwelling unit and upon the lot or premises associated with such dwelling unit:

A. Household pets in numbers normally and commonly associated with the primary residential use of the dwelling unit. "Household pets" are animals commonly or normally kept or owned in association with a residential dwelling unit and which are generally kept or housed within the interior of the dwelling unit, including such animals as hamsters, mice, gerbils, guinea pigs, nonvenomous snakes, parakeets, canaries, finches, other songbirds, small nonvenomous reptiles and amphibians, and fish;

B. Five or fewer domestic animals;

C. One unweaned litter produced by any domestic animal permitted to be kept by this chapter; provided, that the total number of domestic animals kept shall not exceed that number provided in subsection B of this section more than 180 days following the birth of the litter. [Ord. 3343 § 1, 2001].

17.35.040 Keeping of poultry and covered animals in residential zones.

A. The keeping of poultry or covered animals within a residential dwelling unit, or upon the premises connected therewith, shall be prohibited except as provided herein.

B. Covered animals are permitted to be kept on residential property zoned for single-family use (R zones) so long as they meet the requirements of ECC 5.05.130.

C. Any poultry presently and permanently being kept upon the premises of a residential dwelling unit on the effective date of the ordinance codified in this chapter shall be permitted under the provisions of this chapter; provided, that such use is registered with the city of Edmonds development services department as described in subsection D of this section, and that the poultry is kept in strict compliance with the provisions of Chapter 5.05 ECC. In the event that the keeping of poultry is discontinued on the premises for a continuous period of more than 90 days, the use shall be considered terminated and the continued keeping of poultry shall not be permitted.

D. Commencing on February 5, 2001, a registration period of six months, ending August 6, 2001, at 5:00 p.m., is hereby established for the registration of the keeping of poultry

currently occurring in single-family zones. Upon receipt of the registration, the city shall develop a schedule for the inspection of such poultry uses to determine compliance with Chapter 5.05 ECC. If the keeping of poultry is both registered and determined to be in compliance with Chapter 5.05 ECC, then the keeping of poultry shall be considered to be established as a legal nonconforming use.

E. Legal nonconforming keeping of poultry shall receive a permit certificate confirming such status and listing the physical dimensions and other characteristics of the use; provided, however, that the registration and permit of a formerly illegal poultry use may be revoked and/or conditioned in accordance with the provisions of ECC 20.100.040.

F. Failure to register the keeping of poultry with the city of Edmonds development services department within the time period established by the provisions of the ordinance codified in this chapter shall be considered to be presumptive proof that such activity is illegal and subject to abatement. The keeper of such poultry may overcome such a presumption only by presentation of substantial and competent evidence which establishes the legal nonconforming nature of such use by clear and convincing evidence that the use was permitted by Snohomish County or the city of Edmonds, was permitted by such agency and was in complete compliance with the applicable provisions of state law and county or city ordinance, at the date such use was initiated and established.

G. The amendment of the definition of poultry was expanded by the passage of Ordinance No. 3655. In order to permit owners of poultry not previously regulated under the provisions of this code the same rights and privileges previously extended to other poultry owners, a new registration period is established commencing July 1, 2007, and extending for a period of six months, ending on December 3, 2007, at 4:00 p.m. Commencing on that date and for the period established, the keepers of pheasants, quail, guinea fowl and pea fowl may be kept as poultry as a nonconforming use if registered pursuant to the provisions of subsections (D) and (E) of this section. [Ord. 3655 § 2, 2007; Ord. 3343 § 1, 2001].



This page of the Edmonds City Code is current through Ord. 3745, passed June 23, 2009.

Disclaimer: The City Clerk's Office has the official version of the Edmonds City. Users should contact the City Clerk's Office for ordinances passed subsequent to the ordinance cited above.

City Website: <http://www.ci.edmonds.wa.us>
 (<http://www.ci.edmonds.wa.us>)
 City Telephone: (425) 771-0245
 Code Publishing Company
 (<http://www.codepublishing.com/>)

Chapter 8.08
FOWL

Sections:

<u>8.08.010</u>	Running at large prohibited.
<u>8.08.020</u>	Keeping for resale or profit unlawful.
<u>8.08.030</u>	Keeping more than five pairs unlawful.
<u>8.08.040</u>	Buildings used for keeping —Zoning compliance required.

8.08.010 Running at large prohibited.

(a) It is unlawful for any person, firm, company or corporation to permit any chickens, ducks, geese, turkeys, or other domestic or wild fowls belonging to them or under their control to run at large within the city limits.

(b) Fowls, as above described, shall be deemed running at large within the meaning of this section when off the owner's premises and not within his immediate control. (Ord. 251 § § 1, 2, 1925)

8.08.020 Keeping for resale or profit unlawful.

It is unlawful for any person, firm, association, corporation or partnership to raise, care for, breed, maintain or induce the propagation of pigeons or other similar birds or fowl, primarily for resale or profit within the corporate limits of the city. (Ord. 809 § 1, 1960)

8.08.030 Keeping more than five pairs unlawful.

It is unlawful for any person, firm, association, corporation, or group of persons all having the same abode, to raise, care for, breed, maintain, or induce the propagation of more than five pairs of pigeons or similar birds or fowl for any purpose whatsoever within the corporate limits of the city. (Ord. 809 § 2, 1960)

8.08.040 Buildings used for keeping —Zoning compliance required.

Any building, loft, or other structure used in part or whole for any of the purposes set forth in Sections 8.08.020 and 8.08.030 above is hereby denominated an accessory building as such is defined in the Kirkland zoning ordinance, and shall conform to the size and setback limitations as prescribed therefor in the Kirkland zoning ordinance. (Ord. 809 § 3, 1960)