



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

PLANNING DIVISION

701 OCEAN STREET, 4TH FLOOR, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060
 (831) 454-2580 FAX: (831) 454-2131 TDD: (831) 454-2123

Animal Keeping In Residential Districts

The kind and number of animals you keep in residential areas depends on how your property is zoned and the parcel size. The chart below summarizes animal-keeping regulations in Santa Cruz County. For more information, refer to County Code sections: 13.10.322 and 13.10.641-646 and definitions in 13.10.700.

Key for table below

P: Permitted without special approval

N: Not allowed

5: Level 5 Conditional Use Permit required

KIND OF ANIMAL	ZONE DISTRICT			
	RA Residential Agriculture	RR Rural Residential	R-1 Single-Family Residential	RM Multiple-Residential
Dogs and Cats	P (4 dogs or cats but not more than 4 animals)	P (4 dogs or cats but not more than 4 animals)	P (2 Dogs and 2 Cats)	P (1 dog and 2 cats per unit)
Kennels for 5 or more dogs or cats	Level 5 Permit from the Planning Dept and a kennel permit from Environmental Health required.	N	N	N
"Family Animals" and small animals, such as poultry, rabbits and chinchillas	P 6,000 sq ft minimum parcel size Roosters, peacocks, turkey gobblers or guinea fowl are only allowed in residential zone RA only.	P 6,000 sq ft minimum parcel size No roosters, peacocks, turkey gobblers or guinea fowl.	P 6,000 sq ft minimum parcel size No roosters, peacocks, turkey gobblers or guinea fowl.	N
Horses and other farm animals, such as burros, ponies, llamas, alpacas, donkeys, mules, cows, pigs, sheep and goats	P (see acreage standards below*)	Level 5 permit required (see acreage standards below*)	Level 5 permit required if up to R-1-32 zoning P: if R-1-32 zoning or above (see acreage standards below*)	N
Bees	Level 5 permit required	N	N	N
Exotic zoo-type animals	N	N	N	N

*** Number of horses and other farm animals allowed (also see table above for regs for specific zone districts):**

On a 1/2 acre or greater parcel, 4 sheep or goats, or 100 poultry, rabbits, or other small animals are allowed per acre.

On a 1 acre or greater parcel, 2 horses, cows, pigs or llamas are allowed per acre.

On a 10 acre or greater parcel, the number of animals is not limited except that no more than 6 brood sows may be kept.

Animal Keeping Regulations

Certain rules apply when you keep any kind of animal. **Sanitation must be maintained.** This means that droppings must not be allowed to accumulate, and odor, dust and flies must be controlled.

Animals must be securely confined. The County-wide leash law means that any dog found wandering at large can be impounded by Animal Services and the owner cited.

Erosion of the soil must be controlled. Clearing is not allowed in any sensitive habitat (biotic resource area) or on slopes steeper than 30%. For specific information, consult Environmental Planning staff [Schedule an Appointment](#)

When is a Building Permit or Use Permit Required?

Any structure, including barns and stables, of any size on a vacant parcel requires that a building permit must first be obtained. If the proposed structure will be larger than 1000 sq. ft., a Level 4 or 5 Use Permit is also required. Click [here](#) for instructions on how to get a residential building permit.

Fences in the front yard setback are limited to 3 feet in height unless a fence permit or certification is approved. Side and rear yard fence heights are limited to 6 feet maximum height if abutting a street and 8 feet height if not abutting a street. In addition, fences shall not exceed 3 feet within 10 feet of its intersection with a driveway and within 30 feet of its intersection with a road. Refer to County Code section 13.10.525 for fence regulations. Even though a use permit is required, wood fences up to 10 feet high do not require building permits.

Enclosure Rules for Small Animals (Family Animals) In the RA, RR, and R-1 Zone Districts (County Code section 13.10.644 B and C):

Enclosures for small animals (family animals) must be located on the rear 1/3 of the lot unless a Level 4/5 permit is obtained.

The minimum parcel size for family animal raising is 6,000 square feet.

On parcels of 6,000 to 15,000 sq. ft: Fences and animals sheds must be set back from all property lines a distance of 10% of the lot width or 5 feet, whichever is larger, and 25 feet minimum from all houses.

On parcels larger than 15,000 sq. ft. (1/3 acre): Fences and animal sheds must be set back at least 20 feet from all property lines and 40 feet minimum from all houses.

Enclosure Rules for Private Stables in the RR and R-1 Zone Districts (refer to Co. Code section 13.10.641)

Except in the RA zone district, stables must be located midway between the sides of the lot, not closer than 20 feet to the side property lines, and not closer than 50 feet to the front property line, unless a Level 5 use approval is obtained.

Paddocks must be located on the rear half of the lot, not closer than 20 feet to any property line, and not closer than 40 feet to any house, unless a [Level 5](#) use approval is obtained.

In the RA, RR and R-1 zone districts, commercial boarding of horses, ponies, burrows and other animals at a density greater than two per acre requires a Conditional Use Permit (Level 5).

Erosion control

Erosion control provisions in County Code section 16.22.060 shall apply for animal keeping/raising or animal enclosures such as stables and paddocks. The use of stables, paddocks, or corrals shall be accompanied by an erosion control plan prepared pursuant to County Code section 16.22.060.

Commercial boarding of horses, ponies, burrows and other animals at a density greater than two per acre requires a Conditional Use Permit (Level 5).