

# Chicken Raising and Keeping in Spokane County's Urban Zones

In March of 2021, the Board of Commissioners asked the Department of Building and Planning to look into animal raising and keeping in urban residential zones. We have researched the issue and have a recommendation on the topic. Based upon our investigation, which included local area jurisdictions that have implemented zoning code changes to allow animal keeping and raising in urban environments, and conversations with the WSU Extension office, we recommend the following:

- The County should consider a pilot program on this topic
- It should be limited to the keeping of chickens
- It should be limited to the Low Density Residential Zone (LDR)
- An informational brochure on the topic should be produced and be made available on the Building and Planning webpage

During our research, we contacted the City of Spokane, Spokane Valley, Airway Heights, and Cheney. We spoke to both their Planning Departments and the Code Enforcement personnel to get a feel for their experiences with the topic. What we heard was that most jurisdictions were allowing chickens without much trouble, if roosters, which are loud, were excluded.

The City of Spokane modified its ordinance in 2014 to allow a large variety of small farm-type animals with mixed results. This variety of species led to a complicated code that contains educational certificate requirements for some of the less common animals and additional code enforcement activity and challenges. It was reported that many of the newly allowed animals were pets rather than sources of food or fiber and that additional conflicts developed which became code enforcement challenges and calls for service from SCRAPS.

We also reached out to the Municipal Research Center of Washington and were provided with 10 jurisdictional ordinance examples and one model ordinance. We reviewed topical articles on the American Planning Association's (APA) website. SCRAPS was contacted about enforcement issues related to urban animal keeping. The WSU's Extension office, which assisted both Spokane and Spokane Valley in developing their codes, was also consulted. They recommended we limit the allowed animals to chickens.

As background, Spokane County already has provisions for the keeping and raising of both large and small domesticated farm animals in the Rural and Resource zoning categories, as well as, within the Low Density Plus zone.

### Jurisdictional Comparison Table: Urban Residential Animal Keeping

Jurisdiction	Animals allowed in urban areas <sup>1</sup>	Chicken density allowed	Rosters allowed	Setbacks For chickens	Education Certificates Required	Swine allowed
Spokane <sup>2</sup>	B, Ch, Du, Gh, Gt, G, Mi, Mp, N, P, Pi, R, S, T,	1/1000 sf.	No	Standard Side yard setbacks or waiver	Yes, all types except for chickens	Mini pigs
Spokane Valley <sup>3</sup>		1/2000 sf. Max 25	No	Side yard 5' Dwellings 25'	Yes, for beekeeping	No
Airway Heights <sup>4</sup>		Max 4 with min 6000 sf. lot	No	Side and rear =15' Front =25'		No
Cheney <sup>5</sup>	No code					

<sup>1</sup> Animal Codes: A= Alpaca B= Bee hives, Ch= Chinchilla, C= Cow, D= Donkey, Du= Duck, Gh= Guinea hens, Gt= Goat, G= Goose, H= Horse, L= Llama, Mi= Mink, M= Mule, Mp= Mini-pigs, N= Nutria, P= Peacock, Pi= Pigeons, R= Rabbit, S= Sheep, T= Turkey,

<sup>2</sup> Spokane has provision for keeping larger animals in their RA zone

<sup>3</sup> Spokane Valley has provisions for larger animals (A, B, Ch, C, D, Du, Gt, G, H, L, M, Mi, M, R, S, T) on lots greater than one acre

<sup>4</sup> Airway Heights requires a lot area of 6,000 square feet to have chickens

<sup>5</sup> Cheney does not have a code that specifically allows chickens, but they indicate it is occurring

# Draft Code Section:

The purpose of the proposed amendment is to preserve the compatibility between neighboring properties while allowing County residents in suburban environments the ability to raise and keep chickens, thereby increasing the availability of a sustainable food supply closer to the home of the consumer.

Proposed new text is underlined and highlighted.

**Table 606-1, Residential Zones Matrix**

<b>Residential Uses</b>	<b>LDR</b>	<b>LDR-P</b>	<b>MDR</b>	<b>HDR</b>
Accessory dwelling unit, attached	L	L	L	L
Accessory dwelling unit, detached	CU	CU	CU	CU
Animal raising and/or keeping	N	L	N	N
Beekeeping	L	L	L	L
<u>Chicken Raising and Keeping</u>	<u>L</u>	<u>L</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>
Community residential facility (8 or fewer residents) (EPF)	P	P	N	N
Community residential facility (greater than 8 residents, no more than 25 residents) (EPF, LDR/LDR-P Zones)	N	N	P	P
Community treatment facility (8 or fewer residents) (EPF)	CU	CU	N	N
Community treatment facility (greater than 8 residents, no more than 20 residents) (EPF, LDR/LDR-P Zones)	N	N	CU	CU

14.606.230 Limited Uses with Specific Standards Uses that are categorized with an “L” in table 606-1, Residential Zones Matrix, are subject to the corresponding standards of this section. In the case of inconsistencies between section 14.606.220 (Residential Zones Matrix) and section 14.606.230, section 14.606.230 shall govern.

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4. Chicken Raising and Keeping (LDR zone)

- a) Allowed as an accessory use to a primary dwelling.
- b) One chicken per 1,000 square feet of lot area.
- c) Roosters are not allowed.
- d) Pens and hutches must be set back five feet from the property line and 25 feet from dwellings on neighboring properties.
- e) Pens, yards and, grazing areas shall be kept in a clean and sanitary condition, as determined and enforced by the Spokane County Regional Health District.

Chicken Raising and Keeping in the LDR-P zone shall meet the standards of Animal Raising and/or Keeping, per Table 606-1.

# Chicken Raising and Keeping Brochure Outline

To be a printable PDF brochure kept on the Building and Planning web page that will include:

- County chicken raising and keeping standards by zone
- Setback diagrams
- A link to the WSU Extension office which has how-to guidelines and educational materials on urban chicken keeping and care
- Link to example designs for hutches and pens

Below is a link provided by the WSU Extension Office to an Oregon State University publication on chicken keeping:

<https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/sites/catalog/files/project/pdf/em9089.pdf>

