



Boulder County
Land Use Department
Publications

Keeping Animals in Boulder County

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Keeping Animals in Boulder County

Animal Unit Calculations

The different zoning districts in unincorporated Boulder County allow a specific number of animal units per acre. One simply needs to do a calculation based on the animal unit ratios in order to find out how many animals of a specific type are allowed on a particular piece of land, depending on the parcel's size.

For example, if a property owner has 10 acres of land zoned Agricultural (A), they would be allowed a total of 40 animal units on this parcel. This means they could keep 8 horses, 24 head of cattle, 400 chickens, and still be within allowed limitations of the zoning regulations.

Note: Young animals are not be counted until they have been weaned.

Zoning District Limits

Zone	Animal Units Per Acre
A = Agricultural	4
F = Forestry	2
RR = Rural Residential	2
ER = Estate Residential	2
SR = Suburban Residential	0
MF = Multifamily	0
LI = Light Industrial	4
GI = General Industrial	4
MI = Mountain Industrial	2

Animal Units

Per Article 18-108, animal units establish an equivalent density for various species of livestock. See the Animal Units table and calculation example below.

Animal Type	Animals Per Animal Unit
Cattle, Buffalo, & Other Livestock	1
Horse, Mule, Donkey	1
Horse (34 inches or less at withers)	5
Swine, Ostrich	5
Goat, Sheep, Llama	5
Poultry	50
Mink and other similar fur-bearing animals	50



8 Horses =
8 Animal Units

+



24 Cows =
24 Animal Units

+



400 Chickens =
8 Animal Units

=

40

40 Animal Units

Household Pets

Household pets are domestic animals kept for pleasure, exclusive of livestock. Dogs and cats are the two obvious examples. No more than four weaned animals are allowed on one property in the **RR**, **ER**, **SR**, and **MF** zoning districts. No more than seven weaned animals are allowed in all other zoning districts.

Small birds, small reptiles, fish, and small mammals like gerbils, rabbits, mice, and similar small animals are not limited in number (Article 4-516).

Kennels

A kennel is defined as any place or premises, other than a pet shop or veterinary clinic, used in whole or part for the keeping of eight or more dogs or cats in any combination, whether the animals are boarded or household pets. Kennels are an allowed use by either Special Review or Limited Impact Special Review (depending on the size of the kennel) in the **A** and **MI** zoning districts. This type of use is not allowed in Boulder County's other zoning districts. (Article 4-503)

Limited Impact Special Review is required for kennels with eight to 12 dogs or cats, and the animals must be kept a minimum of 100 feet from any property line unless other mitigating circumstances exist or circumstances which have the same or better mitigating effect are created (for example, if a hill or berm mitigates the sound of the animals).

Special Review is required for kennels with more than 12 dogs or cats, and the animal must be kept a minimum of 300 feet from any property line unless other mitigating circumstances exist, or circumstances which have the same or better mitigating effect are created.

If a residence is used as the holding facility for boarded animals, the kennel is limited to no more than 12 boarded animals, and in no case shall there be more than 15 total dogs (including household pets) or more than 15 total cats (including household pets). The setback requirements also apply to residences used as kennels.

Horse Keeping

Accessory Horse Keeping

Accessory Horse Keeping is the keeping of horses (including mules and donkeys) on a parcel where this use is not the principal use of the parcel. This is a common accessory use in Boulder County where a homeowner will have a few horses on his or her property for the individuals own use. Accessory Horse Keeping is allowed by right in the **F**, **A**, **RR**, **ER**, **SR**, **MF**, and **MI** zoning districts.

This use is permitted in combination with the keeping of other livestock so long as the maximum number of allowed animal units (horses and other types of animals) in the relevant zoning district is not exceeded.

In the **SR** and **MF** districts, residents may have riding horses for their own use, if one-half acre of pasture is available for each horse (Article 4-516).

Boarding Horses

Horse boarding is considered an **Open Agricultural Use** and is allowed as a use-by-right in the majority of the county's unincorporated land area. The **F**, **A**, **RR**, **LI**, **GI**, and **MI** zoning districts all allow Open Agricultural Uses by right. Please be aware that once the boarding facility is used by 15 different people per month, other than the owner or manager of the property, the use is considered an **Equestrian Center** (see below for definition).

Please refer to section 4-502 (E) of the Land Use Code for further information about the requirements of an Open Agricultural Use.

Equestrian Centers

Equestrian Centers are establishments where 15 or more different people per month, other than the owner or manager of the property, are, for a fee, trained or instructed in riding, driving, or showing horses.

Equestrian Centers are allowed as a use-by-right in the Agricultural zoning district and are allowed as a use by Special Review in the Forestry and Rural Residential zoning districts. Limited Impact Special Review is required for equestrian centers with amplified sound and/or lighted outdoor riding, driving, or showing of horses. Special Review is required for a facility to host competitive events open to participants outside of those who board or train at the facility. Unlighted outdoor equestrian arenas must be set back 300 feet from existing schools, churches, and dwellings on other lots.

Article 4-502(B) of the Land Use Code lists further requirements for Equestrian Centers.

Non-Domestic Animals

Keeping any species not listed by the Colorado Division of Wildlife as a domestic animal requires the Board of County Commissioners' approval through a Special Review process, although specific wildlife rehabilitation may be permitted by right. All applicable local, state, and federal permits must be maintained (Article 4-501(E)).

Wildlife Rehabilitation

Wildlife rehabilitation licensed by the **Colorado Division of Wildlife** is permitted by right or by Special Review. Wildlife rehabilitation that includes 20 or fewer animals at any time for small mammal species (such as rabbits, squirrels, raccoons, fox, and bats), bird species (except raptors), non-venomous reptiles or amphibians with indoor caging is permitted by right.

Wildlife rehabilitation of small mammal species that includes more than 20 animals at any time is permitted by **Site Plan Review**. Wildlife rehabilitation of any number of large animal species (such as coyote, bobcat, mountain lion, bear, deer, and elk), birds of prey species (all raptors), or venomous reptiles and amphibians is permitted by Special Review.

Restrictive Covenants

If you live in a subdivision, please check your covenants. Covenants are privately enforced, meaning that Boulder County does not enforce their restrictions. Often, private covenants are more restrictive in allowing animals than Boulder County's zoning regulations. Covenants are usually recorded with the Boulder County Clerk and Recorder's office.