

## Key Proposed Pet Business Code Changes

This document outlines key changes Public Health is proposing to update the pet business codes. For more information, see [kingcounty.gov/health/pet-business-code](http://kingcounty.gov/health/pet-business-code).

### Board of Health (BOH) 8.03.040 Definitions

This section updates some of the definitions in the code to make them easier to understand and more up to date with how pet businesses operate today.

Proposed changes include:

- Adding new terms such as “pet business,” “incompatible animals,” and “home-based pet business.”
- Updating existing definitions to make them clearer and more consistent.
- Removing terms that are outdated or no longer used (see examples in the table below).

Change Type	Item	Summary
Add	Incompatible Animals / Pet Business	Adds definitions, including establishing “pet business” as an umbrella term for all businesses regulated under BOH 8.03. The Director may determine when animals are incompatible based on observed behavior, documented incidents, or veterinary guidance.
Add	Home-Based Pet Business	Defines a regulated pet business that operates partially or fully within a dwelling or residential property, including garages, basements, sheds, barns, or other areas where regulated activities occur.
Removes	Aquarium Stock	Removes definition as this will be defined now under Aquarium.

Modifies	Aquarium	Removes live fish, corals, and invertebrates; adds turtles. Aquariums that only sell fish will be exempt from the code.
Modifies	Commercial Kennel	Now called “pet boarding facility,” removes propagation, breeding, and importation businesses from the definition.
Modifies	Establishment	Removes breeding and trading of animals from the definition.
Modifies	Mobile grooming unit	Clarifies that trailers are included in the definition.
Modifies	Pet	Adds poultry to the definition of pet for consistency.
Modifies	Pet daycare facility	Simplifies definition for clarity.
Modifies	Pet grooming service	Clarifies what the pet grooming service includes and does not include.
Modifies	Poultry retail business	Expand the exemption for businesses that hold poultry for more than 24 hours to 72 hours.

**BOH 8.03.060 Infection control plan and isolation plan requirements**

Proposed changes focus on improving how facilities prevent and respond to disease. These include:

- Adding more detail to infection control plan requirements, including staff training on risks when working with animals and clear procedures for documenting and reporting bites.
- Clarifying that the Public Health Director may require additional information to ensure compliance with the code.
- [New subsection] Adding a new requirement for an isolation plan, including procedures for managing sick or injured animals.

### **BOH 8.03.070 Indoor facility construction standards for pet businesses**

Proposed changes focus on improving sanitation, safety, and consistency across facilities. These include:

- Combining indoor facility construction standards across most pet businesses (excluding pet food retail businesses) to create more consistent requirements.
- Requiring a sink or tub separate from restroom handwashing sinks for cleaning equipment and supplies, to reduce cross-contamination (applies to new businesses and remodels; existing approved setups may continue).
- Requiring soap and a method for drying hands at sinks (such as paper towels, clean towels, or air dryers) to support proper hand hygiene.
- Prohibiting carpet and other absorbent, non-laundryable materials in animal contact areas, since these cannot be effectively cleaned and disinfected.

### **New section: Indoor facility equipment standards for pet businesses**

Proposed Updates:

- Establishes a dedicated section for indoor facility equipment standards, separate from construction standards.
- Requires home-based pet businesses to physically separate animal care areas from primary living spaces (e.g., kitchens, bathrooms, bedrooms) to reduce household exposure to pathogens.

### **New Section: BOH 8.03.080 Pet business primary animal enclosure requirements**

Proposed changes focus on improving space, animal welfare, and the ability for animals to move naturally. These include:

- Requiring facilities that house animals overnight to maintain dedicated primary enclosures that can individually house animals when necessary.
- Adding space requirements for primary enclosures so animals have enough room to:
  - Lie down fully extended without any part of their body touching the sides of the enclosure.
  - Turn around and move normally, engage in postural movements, and avoid overcrowding.

- When animals are housed together in a shared enclosure, each animal must be able to lie down fully extended without touching another animal or the enclosure walls when all animals are lying down at the same time.

### **Pet business group housing standards**

Adding standards for group housing of cats and dogs so that co-housing or commingling occurs in ways that support animal health and staff safety.

These may include:

- Prohibiting the housing of incompatible animals together to reduce stress, conflict, and risk of injury or disease spread (standards often recommend separation of animals that are ill, different species, or that do not get along).
- Setting staffing ratios and group size limits to ensure animals are properly supervised and safe.
  - One staff member for every 20 cats or dogs when animals are commingled (staff must always remain with the group).
  - Two staff must be on site whenever more than 10 dogs are commingled.
  - Limits on group sizes, such as no more than 20 cats or 40 dogs in a commingled group.
  - Cats may be co-housed in groups of up to six without continuous on-site supervision if compatible in temperament and provided adequate space and resources.
  - Prohibiting dogs from being cohoused overnight unless they are from the same household and the owner consents, to lower stress and reduce risk of conflict in smaller spaces.
  - Adding minimum usable floor space requirements so animals have room to move and rest comfortably.
  - At least 20 square feet of usable floor space per cat.
  - At least 50 square feet per dog under 50 pounds and 70 square feet per dog 50 pounds or more.
- Requiring appropriate numbers of food, water, and litter resources for cats in group settings (for example, one litter box per cat plus an additional box, with space between boxes; one food and water set per cat plus an extra water bowl).

*These kinds of space and compatibility requirements are based on commonly accepted animal care practices that encourage adequate movement, reduced stress, and proper social interactions among animals.*

### **Public animal contact standards for animal shelters**

Proposed changes focus on reducing the risk of disease transmission when the public interacts with animals. These may include:

- Requiring handwashing or sanitation stations and signage at animal areas so visitors can clean their hands after touching or being near animals. Providing soap, water, hand wipes, or hand sanitizer and visible signs is shown to lower the risk of spreading germs from animals to people in public settings.
- Requiring cats, dogs, and ferrets that are accessible to the public to be vaccinated for rabies. Keeping vaccinations up to date for animals in public interaction settings helps protect the public from this serious, preventable disease.
- Requiring facilities that house animals overnight to provide a dedicated individual enclosure for each animal present. Gives animals a separate place to go when they aren't getting along, are injured, or if there's an emergency involving a person or another animal.

### **BOH 8.03.090 Pet business sanitation standards**

This section updates existing code requirements. Public Health is considering revisions to strengthen sanitation practices and reduce the spread of disease in pet businesses.

Proposed updates include:

- Requires businesses to have enough employees to immediately remove animal feces, urine, or other bodily fluids and clean and disinfect soiled areas.

### **BOH 8.03.100 Pet shop and poultry retail business animal health, care, and disease prevention standards**

Proposed changes focus on improving animal care and reducing disease risks in retail settings. These may include:

- Requiring appropriate temperature, humidity, and hideouts based on the needs of the species to help animals stay comfortable and healthy.
- Prohibiting incompatible animals from being housed together to reduce stress and prevent conflicts.

- Adding care standards for feeder animals (such as crickets, mealworms, and other insects) so these animals are kept in sanitary and humane conditions.
- Clarifying that pet shops must refrain from selling cats and dogs except as allowed by RCW 16.52.360.

### **BOH 8.03.180 Pet shop quarterly reporting requirements**

This section updates existing code requirements. Public Health is considering removing outdated reporting requirements to align with current state law.

Proposed updates may include:

- This section will be eliminated to remove outdated requirements and to align with state law. Under RCW 16.52.360 pet shops must refrain from selling cats and dogs.
- Therefore reporting is not required.

### **BOH 8.03.190 Pet business reporting of animal bites and disease outbreaks**

Proposed changes focus on simplifying reporting and prioritizing higher-risk events that are more likely to contribute to disease spread. These may include:

- Updating the animal bite reporting requirement so that only bites by unvaccinated dogs, cats, or ferrets must be reported, instead of all bites. This change would help reduce unnecessary reporting when the animal's rabies vaccination status is already known and the risk of rabies exposure is low.

### **BOH 8.03.240 Animal health, care, and disease prevention standards for pet boarding facilities and pet daycare facilities**

Proposed changes focus on strengthening health, care, and disease prevention standards in boarding and daycare settings. These may include:

- Adding a requirement for facilities to provide appropriate shelter and species-specific opportunities for exercise, along with written logs of food, water, care, and medications. Keeping records and meeting basic needs supports animal health and helps staff monitor wellbeing.
- Requiring that isolation areas be adequately ventilated so that air quality supports animal health and helps reduce the spread of disease in communal settings.
- Requiring that sick or injured animals receive veterinary care within 24 hours. Many boarding regulations require a relationship with a veterinarian to ensure prompt diagnosis and treatment when animals get ill.

- Replacing the current requirement for written acknowledgment of rabies vaccination with verification by a veterinarian, which aligns with standard animal care practices that rely on professional documentation to confirm vaccine status.

### **BOH 8.03.260 Animal health, care, and disease prevention standards for animal shelters**

Proposed changes focus on strengthening care and disease prevention in animal shelters. These may include:

- Requiring that sick or injured animals receive veterinarian-managed care within 24 hours, which supports early diagnosis and treatment and aligns with best practices in shelter medicine. Veterinary involvement helps identify and manage health issues and reduce disease transmission among animals.
- Establishing baseline disease prevention practices such as routine health evaluations, vaccination protocols, parasite control, and cleaning/disinfection procedures to keep animals healthy and reduce the spread of common infections.
- Effective disease prevention in shelters includes intake evaluations, preventive care, and sanitation practices tailored to local risks.

### **BOH 8.03.290 Pet food retail business sanitation standards**

Proposed changes focus on strengthening sanitation and hygiene practices. These may include:

- Requiring that sinks at pet food retail businesses are equipped with soap and a way to dry hands, such as paper towels, a clean towel system, or an air dryer. This helps ensure people can wash and dry their hands properly, which is an important part of preventing the spread of germs.

### **BOH 8.03.310 Pet food retail business sales of uncooked or partially cooked animal-derived pet foods**

Proposed changes focus on reducing health risks associated with raw or partially cooked pet foods. These may include:

- Clarifying that pet food retailers must keep unwrapped, uncooked, or partially cooked foods and treats at least 3 feet off the ground so that small children and other people cannot easily access them.

*This kind of precaution helps reduce the chance that germs from raw pet food, which can contain harmful bacteria like Salmonella or Listeria, spread to children.*

### **BOH 8.03.340 Permit requirement**

Proposed changes focus on clarifying permit requirements and improving transparency. These may include:

- Removing the annual permit requirement for aquarium-only pet shops that sell only fish and invertebrates. Pet shops that sell other animals (including amphibians, reptiles, or mammals) would still need a permit based on regulatory categories in the code.
- Adding a permit classification for Category 4 shelters (small animal shelters for non-canine, non-feline species) so they are listed clearly in the fee schedule and permit structure.
- Requiring that permits be displayed in a public entry area where customers can easily see them, improving transparency for people visiting the business or facility.
- Clarifying that the Director of Public Health has the authority to suspend or revoke permits for violations of the code, including failure to pay required fees or penalties, to ensure compliance with standards.

### **BOH 8.03.350 Plan review application process**

Proposed changes focus on clarifying when plan review is needed and making the application process more predictable. These may include:

- Requiring pet businesses to notify Public Health if the facility has been remodeled or has not operated for more than one year so staff can determine whether a plan review is necessary before reopening or remodel work begins. This helps ensure facilities meet current health and safety standards before they open or change.
- Requiring applicants to pay plan review fees at the time they submit their plans so the review can begin promptly.
- Clarifying that plan review is required for all pet businesses, except for pet food retail businesses. Poultry retailers would no longer be exempt and would need plan review like other pet businesses.
- Setting an expiration date for approved plans at one year unless an extension is granted, so plan approvals stay current and reflect up-to-date conditions and requirements.

*These kinds of requirements such as notifying authorities before reopening or remodeling, paying fees at application submission, defining who needs review, and setting expiration*

*dates, are common in public health plan review processes to help ensure facilities are designed and operated with public health protections in mind (e.g., food and facility plan review best practices).*

### **BOH 8.03.360 Permit application process**

Proposed changes focus on clarifying application and renewal requirements to improve transparency and ensure accurate information. These may include:

- Requiring poultry retailers to provide additional information on their permit applications — such as the types of animals they sell, whether they sell uncooked or partially cooked pet foods or treats, and whether they have sinks for both handwashing and equipment cleaning.
- Clarifying that permit applications and permit renewals can be denied if outstanding fees or money owed to Public Health have not been paid, including renewal fees.
- These updates are meant to help Public Health better understand how businesses operate and to make sure that permits are current, complete, and compliant with all financial requirements.

### **BOH 8.03.370 Inspections**

Proposed changes focus on improving how inspection results are delivered and documented. These may include:

- Requiring Public Health to provide businesses with a completed inspection report following an inspection, but removing the requirement to give a paper copy at the inspection site.
- Instead, inspection results would be emailed to the operator in an electronic format, making it easier to deliver clear, complete reports quickly and avoid issues with lost or illegible paper copies. Electronic delivery also supports faster record keeping and retrieval for both the business and Public Health.

## **Title 2: Fee structure**

### Summary of Proposed Fee Structure Updates

The King County Board of Health Code Title 2.13 Director Regulated Activities: Title 8 (Zoonotic Disease Prevention) establishes the fee structure that funds Public Health's oversight of pet-related businesses in King County. This fee structure was last updated in 2024 through a limited rate study that adjusted hourly rates but did not reevaluate the

overall fee structure. A comprehensive review of the funding model has not occurred since the program was established in 2010.

### **Why update the fee structure?**

We are proposing updates to the fee structure for pet-related businesses to better reflect current industry practices, scale fees to business size and level of effort, improve efficiency and transparency by communicating actual costs upfront, and support consistency across all permitted establishments.

### **Key proposed changes include:**

**Updated plan review fees:** A standard upfront fee (typically 3 hours) for most new business plan reviews to better reflect the time required and reduce billing delays.

**Adjusted inspection/permit fees:** Increased minimum activity time (generally 2 hours) to align closer with the actual time it takes to perform inspection related work.

**Tiered permit categories for boarding/daycare:** Fees scaled based on the number of dogs and cats to better reflect facility size, staffing and complexity.

- **Tier 1:** Capacity Up to 10 dogs/cats(lowest fee)
- **Tier 2:** Capacity 11-40 dogs/cats
- **Tier 3:** Capacity 41-60 dogs/cats
- **Tier 4:** Capacity >61 dogs/cats (highest fee)

**Review and updates to cost recovery for additional services:** Updates to fees for variances, remodels, re-inspections, and field visits to reflect actual staff time.