



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): Pet Businesses

This information sheet offers FAQs about pet businesses in unincorporated King County, providing guidance on establishing, modifying, or expanding a pet business and necessary permits. This information sheet is not an exhaustive list of all standards and regulations that may be required.

1. Why do pet related businesses require permitting?

Pet and animals related businesses are commercial in nature. Many buildings that house animals must meet building standards the same as other commercial businesses. This ensures that they are safe and sound. Some building considerations include fire, electrical, and plumbing code compliance, handicap accessibility, and standards for labor and industry. There are also water and waste-water considerations.

2. What pet businesses require King County Public Health Department permits?

The following businesses require approval from King County Public Health Department and must comply with all applicable development regulations from King County Permitting Division:

- Pet Daycare
- Pet Boarding (commercial kennel and catteries, kennel-free dog boarding)
- Pet Shops (that sell animals or fish)
- Poultry Retailers (sales of chicks, chickens, ducks, etc.)
- Pet Groomers (includes U-Wash, self-wash stations, nail trims)
- Mobile Groomers
- Animal Shelters (includes pet adoption centers and animal rescue that adopts pets)
- Cat Cafes
- Pet Food Retailers (pet food requiring temperature control or bulk animal parts)
- Dog and Cat Breeders

Visit Public Health Seattle & King County's [Pet Business Regulations and Permits](#) webpage for details.

3. What permits or approvals do I need for my Pet Business?

To operate a pet business in unincorporated King County, you need to obtain:

- A. Land use and/or building permits from King County Permitting Division.
- B. Pet Business Permit from the Seattle-King County Public Health Department. To learn more about how to obtain a Pet Business Permit, please refer to the [Pet Business Regulations and Permits webpage](#).

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- C. If your property has an on-site septic system, you'll need to obtain septic system review and approval from Public Health - Seattle & King County's [On-site Septic System Program](#).

Please refer to the [Flow Chart: Applicable Pet Business Permits](#) on page 6 for additional details.

**Additional permits may be required depending on the project design and type of pet business you plan to operate.*

4. How do I obtain a Pet Business Permit from Seattle-King County Public Health?

Visit Public Health - Seattle & King County's [Pet Business Regulations and Permits](#) webpage for details about how to apply and obtain a pet business permit from the King County Zoonotic Disease Program.

5. How do I know if my property is zoned to have a pet business?

King County Code (KCC) [Title 21A, Zoning](#) lists all permitted uses for each zone. To determine whether your proposed pet business is allowed in your zone, please (a) identify the zoning designation of your property and (b) refer to the land use classification tables in KCC 21A.08. King County online interactive mapping system ([iMaps](#)) can be used to locate your property and identify the zoning designation. You can refer to the [Zoning Code: Permitted Use Tables, Bulletin 18A](#) for instructions on how to interpret the KCC 21A.08 land use tables.

Seattle-King County Public Health Department will always need zoning and land use approval for your pet business. Obtain a zoning certification letter from King County Permitting Division by submitting a [Zoning Certification Request](#).

6. What are the different types of Pet Business Land Use Classifications per King County Zoning Code, Title 21A?

- Hobby Kennels (KCC 21A.06.660A)
- Hobby Cattery (KCC 21A.06.177)
- Commercial Dog Kennels (KCC 21A.06.660)
- Kennel-Free Dog Boarding and Daycare Facilities (KCC 21A.06.661)
- Dog Training Facilities (KCC 21A.06.328)
- Animal Specialties (SIC Manual, Industry # 0752), includes pet grooming services, animal shelters, pet daycare, kennel-free boarding and daycare, and other animal specialty services.
- Stable (KCC 21A.06.1220)
- Pets Shops (KCC 21A.06.885)
- Livestock Sales (KCC 21A.06.710)
- Wildlife Shelter (KCC 21A.06.1425)
- Veterinary Clinic (SIC Manual, Industry # 074)
- Public Agency Animal Control Facility (KCC 21A.06.920)

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- Zoo/Wildlife Exhibit (SIC Manual, Industry # 8433)

7. What is the process for obtaining permits from King County Permitting Division?

The following steps and procedures identify the process for ensuring the facility is compliant and has obtained all applicable permits with King County Permitting Division.

1. Identify if your property is allowed to have the proposed pet business. Refer to question number 5 for details about zoning allowances.
2. If the proposed facility requires a Conditional Use Permit (CUP), you will need to apply for a mandatory Pre-Application Meeting and CUP with King County Permitting Division. Refer to question 14 for more details about the CUP process.
3. If all King County Zoning Code standards are met and a CUP is not required, the applicant should obtain a building permit with King County Permitting Division. Refer to questions 12 and 13 for additional details about the building permit process.
4. If the applicant is not aware which or what permits are required for the proposed pet business, then they should apply for a voluntary Pre-Application Meeting with King County Permitting Division. This will determine what permits are necessary and any required code standards and site improvements that will need to be addressed during the permit. Please refer to the [Pre-Application Meeting Information sheet](#) for more information about how to apply.
5. If the applicant has opened a pet business permit without going through land use and zoning, they will need to apply for an [Already Built Construction \(ABC\) Pre-Application Meeting](#).

**Please refer to the [Flow Chart: Applicable Pet Business Permits](#) on page 6 for additional details.*

8. Can my pet business qualify as a home occupation?

Most pet businesses cannot operate as a home occupation per King County zoning code. To operate from a residential structure, the pet business must operate entirely indoors, may not exceed 20% of the home, must limit the number of vehicles/customer visits, and should not show exterior evidence of a home occupation. Residential structures using an on-site septic system for pet business wastewater is not appropriate and requires further review by King County Public Health On-Site Septic System Program for any associated improvements prior to using it for such purposes. For more details about home occupations standards, you can refer to KCC 21A.30.080 and KCC 21A.30.085.

Dog care through third party websites may be allowed if it is limited to 3 dogs or less on-site at any time (see question 9 below).

9. Am I allowed to offer dog care services through websites that connect pet sitters with clients such as Rover or Wag?

This may be allowed if the total number dogs is 3 or less at any time for dog boarding or daycare service. If the host has their own dogs in addition to dogs they care for through

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these services, then they are limited to a total of 5 dogs on the property. Rental properties, apartments, and homeowners' associations may have more strict rules, but this is not regulated by King County.

10. How many animals am I allowed to have as part of my pet business?

Permitted pet businesses are required to keep animals in adequate kennels/enclosures or containment areas that meet space, building material, and humane animal care requirements. The number of animals allowed on your property depends on several factors:

- Property size
- Number, type, and location of enclosures
- Types of animals

For more information about animal density requirements, refer to [Small Animals & Livestock \(Bulletin 41A\)](#).

11. Are there any restrictions or dimensional standards for pet business facilities such as setback and lot size?

King County Title 21A-Zoning does contain specific requirements related to setbacks and lot size. Please refer to the following zoning code sections for more details about these requirements:

- General property setback requirements can be found in KCC 21A.12.030 and 040 Density & Dimensions table. All nonresidential uses (including pet businesses) in a Rural Area (RA), Residential (R), and Urban Reserve Zone (UR) require a minimum of 30-foot setback from all property lines (KCC 21A.12.220).
- Additional specific setback, lot size, and animal density requirements can be found in KCC 21A.30.020. For more information, you can also refer to the [Small Animals & Livestock \(Bulletin 41A\)](#).

12. Is a Building Permit Required?

A building permit is required for: construction, alteration, movement, enlargement, replacement, repair, equipment, change of use and occupancy, location, maintenance, removal and demolition of every building or structure or any appurtenances connected or attached to such buildings or structures.

It is important to clarify that a building permit is required in the following circumstances:

- Even if a building is not altered or modified, a change to the use and/or occupancy still requires a building permit. This includes anytime a residential building is being changed to a pet business use.
- Structures being used for a pet business use are not exempt from a building permit if they are under 200 square feet. This exemption only applies to residential tool and storage sheds, playhouses, tree supported structures used for play, and similar uses per KCC 16.02.240.

Some examples of common situations where a building permit would be required:

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- Converting a garage to animal housing
- Placement of a shipping container to become animal housing
- Adding rooms to an outbuilding on a property
- Adding sheds or structures that will be used to house cats or dogs
- Converting a barn to a pet daycare or boarding facility
- Remodeling a home to become a commercial boarding or breeding facility

13. How do I obtain a building permit related to my pet business facility?

You can find information about how to apply for building permit for a pet business facility through the Permitting Division's [Information Sheet & Forms](#) webpage. You can refer directly to the "Commercial Construction" section for new construction and the "Commercial - Tenant Improvement" section for existing structures that are being converted to a pet or animal business.

14. What is a Conditional Use Permit (CUP)? How do I know if it is required?

A CUP is a land use permit granted by the King County Permitting Division to locate a specific use on a particular property. This may be required based on the zoning of the property. A CUP application will function to review the proposed use, determine whether is allowed, and apply any applicable conditions during the review process to ensure compliance with King County zoning standards and compatibility with nearby land uses. It is important to note that a CUP is required prior to and in addition to a building permit. To find out more information about the CUP application process, please refer to the [Conditional Use Permit \(CUP\) Instructions & Information](#). It is important to note that a mandatory [Pre-Application Meeting](#) is required prior to applying for any CUP application.

To determine if a CUP is required on your property, see the land use classification tables in KCC 21A.08. You can refer to the [Zoning Code: Permitted Use Tables, Bulletin 18A](#) for instructions on how to interpret the KCC 21A.08 land use tables.

15. Am I able to use my existing on-site septic system for the pet business?

Wastewater from your pet business is different waste than residential waste, due to dog feces, urine, cleaners, and disinfectants. This waste may not be appropriate for a residential on-site septic system. Wastewater from a pet related business typically cannot discharge to septic, and generally requires a holding tank. Please contact the [On-site Sewage System \(OSS\) Program](#) with the Seattle-King County Public Health Department.

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Flow Chart: Applicable Pet Business Permits

