

REGIONAL ANIMAL SERVICES OF KING COUNTY (RASKC)  
2023 ORDINANCE UPDATE OVERVIEW  
JULY 13, 2023

In June 2023 a multiyear effort to review and update the King County Code Title 11 (Animal Services) was completed with a new ordinance reviewed and passed unanimously by the King County Council. Many of the changes reflect current state law and for ease of enforcement these state laws were incorporated into County code to permit enforcement appeal hearings under the County Hearing Examiner instead of burdening local Courts.

Here are the notable revisions:

### **Potentially Dangerous and Dangerous Animals**

King County code has always held pet owners responsible for both threatening behavior and severe animal bites under the single category of "Vicious" in the existing animal code. To provide specific restraint, handling requirements and enforcement penalties based on the severity of the animal incident, RASKC adopted language based on the state laws' two tiers of severity (Potentially dangerous and dangerous categories).

- Under the new code a potentially dangerous animal declaration would replace the vicious designation, keeping much of the current restraint requirements but requiring owners to register the animal annually with RASKC. The potentially dangerous animal declaration aligns with surrounding jurisdictions, has a defined process for appeal, requires registration of the potentially dangerous animal as well as clear penalties for violating restraint.
- The more severe classification for incidents where a human or domesticated animal is severely injured or killed by an animal, is a dangerous animal. To legally maintain such an animal in the RASKC jurisdiction, the code requires stringent insurance and enhanced restraint requirements to ensure the safety of the community. RASKC notes that a passed amendment requested by the County Hearing Examiner states under the definition of Dangerous animal that: An animal shall not be declared a "dangerous animal" if the animal has not been previously found to be potentially dangerous, vicious, or dangerous, and the severe injury or death is to a domesticated animal other than pets or large livestock.

### **Prohibition from owning, caring for or residing with any animals**

The revised Title 11 incorporates state law RCW 16.52.200 which identifies civil penalties for a person who is prohibited from owning animals after an animal cruelty conviction and found to own, care for, or reside with an animal.

### **Exotic animal possession**

Certain dangerous exotic animals remain prohibited in King County unless they meet the exceptions as defined in RCW. Enforcement mechanism set under proposed code changes.

### **Leave or confine any animal in unattended motor vehicle or enclosed space**

The new code adds this violation type as a new nuisance under KCC title 11 by adopting the RCW by reference. This option eliminates having to enforce the RCW with a notice of infraction (Court burden) instead using our current notice of violation and appeal process.

## **Dog Tethering**

Similarly, this new code also adds a new nuisance to KCC title 11 adopting the RCW by reference. This option eliminates having to enforce RCW with a notice of infraction instead using our current notice of violation and appeal process.

## **Failure to Provide Adequate Care**

This violation has a lower threshold than animal cruelty. Aligns with necessary food, necessary water and necessary shelter definitions in RCW (Note: in proposed change we include cat in shelter which is not included in RCW).

## **Pet waste pickup**

A violation has been added for failure of pet caretaker to remove the feces of their domesticated animal from another's premises and deposit the same in an appropriate receptacle.

## **Code clean-up**

Repeal the following sections:

- Pet shop, grooming parlor and commercial kennel language are regulated by Seattle King County Public Health under the Board of Health code.
- Guard dog. No existing or requested permits in more than ten years.
- Rabies. Board of Health code adopted by reference within updated title 11.

## **Clarity and Consistency**

Proposed code all date sensitive language has been changed to calendar days, replacing language that used hours or other variations.

Definitions added or modified to align with State Law, Board of Health Code or Zoning Code.

## **Fee Changes**

Dangerous Animal annual registration fee \$250.00 plus pet license

Potentially Dangerous Animal annual registration fee \$125.00 plus pet license

Notice of violation for failure to comply with potentially dangerous animal requirements \$250.00

Notice of violation for failure to comply with dangerous animal requirements \$500.00

Transfer fee of an existing valid pet license from previous jurisdiction to RASKC \$5.00