



Backyard Chickens Fact Sheet

City of Lexington

The City of Lexington allows the keeping of chickens in accordance with use and design standards adopted in 2019. While the keeping of chickens is allowed, there are a number of conditions to protect the residential integrity of your neighborhood and the health and safety of the chickens. The Code of the City of Lexington is available on the City's website, www.lexingtonva.gov and the regulations for keeping chickens can be found in Section 420.11.1.1.

Application Process:

- A permit is required for the keeping of chickens and the permit must be issued before you obtain any chickens.
 - The application fee is \$35 and this is a one-time fee, not an annual fee. The chicken application can be found at <https://www.lexingtonva.gov/services/forms/-folder-38>
 - A sketch must be included with your application showing the area where the chickens will be housed, distances from the coop and pen to your rear and side property boundaries, and all types and sizes of enclosures in which the chickens will be kept.
 - Planning staff will review the application to approve the location of the coop and pen prior to construction.
 - Upon completion of construction, you need to call the Planning Department to request a final inspection prior to issuance of a chicken permit (462-3704).
 - The permit applicant must either be the owner of the property, or you may provide written consent from the property owner to keep chickens on the property.
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Coops and Pens:

- Chickens cannot roam free and they must be kept in a pen or coop at all times.
- The chicken coop is a structure within a pen that houses the chickens and is built and maintained with materials as an impenetrable barrier to keep the chickens confined and secure from other animals, providing not less than three (3) square feet per chicken.
- The pen is an area of property that must be enclosed at all times and on all sides, including the top, with a strong fence of mesh wire to keep the chickens secure, providing a space not less than eight (8) square feet per chicken.
- Coops and pens may be located in a rear yard and may also be located in a side yard if the side yard is not adjacent to a public street.
- Check with the Planning Department for minimum rear and side yard setback requirements for your zoning district (462.3704).
- Coops and pens must be kept in a sanitary condition at all times.
- No building permit is required for the coop or pen unless they exceed 256 square feet.

General Standards:

- No more than six (6) chickens may be allowed per property, regardless of the number of dwellings on a parcel.
- Roosters are not allowed.
- The sale of chicken eggs on or from the property is not allowed.
- Feed must be stored in containers that are impenetrable to animals.
- Chickens cannot be slaughtered or processed outdoors.
- Offensive odors from chickens or manure must not be detectable at any time from your property boundaries.
- Chicken permits may be revoked by the Zoning Administrator for violations of these regulations

Historic Districts:

- *Is your property located in a historic district?*
- *Is the proposed pen or coop visible from a public street in a historic district?*
- If so, please call the Planning Department to determine if a Certificate of Appropriateness (C.O.A.) is required prior to the construction of the pen and coop. If a C.O.A. is required, the Lexington Architectural Review Board reviews such applications. An additional fee is required for the review of a C.O.A., and an inspection is required once the work has been completed.

This fact sheet summarizes the regulations for the keeping of chickens in Lexington and the complete regulations may be found in **Section 420.11.1.1.** of the Lexington City Code at lexingtonva.gov. Regulations can change, so please call the Planning Department before you construct a coop or pen for the keeping of chickens. For more information regarding the application process, the fee, yard setback requirements, or the requirements of a Certificate of Appropriateness, **call the Planning Department at (540) 462-3704.**

The usda.gov website is a great resource for raising chickens and you may also contact the Rockbridge County Extension Agent (463-4734) for additional information on how to raise chickens.