

Zoning Code (ZC) Amendment Crowing Fowl FAQs

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Why is the County amending the Zoning Code to address roosters?

The County has been receiving a large number of complaints and concerns related to the keeping of crowing fowl, in particular roosters.

- 311 has received over 800 unique cases related to crowing fowl between January 1, 2022 and July 25, 2025. The majority of the complaints were related to the noise, keeping of roosters, inhumane treatment, and cockfighting.
- The proposed County Code and Zoning Code amendments are intended to address complaints related to noise, sanitation, and neighborhood compatibility, as well as general animal welfare and humane animal keeping practices to assist in the prevention of ongoing illegal activities such as cockfighting. Provisions related to sanitation and humane animal keeping practices can also help prevent the transmission of disease, including but not limited to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI).
- Amendments to Zoning Code Chapters 3, 5 and 7 aim to address land use compatibility and to help mitigate nuisances while preserving agricultural uses that are consistent with the character and goals of Sacramento County's diverse communities.
- Amendments to Sacramento County Code Title 8 by Animal Care Services, addresses general animal welfare and animal keeping practices which can also help to further deter illegal activities involving roosters.

Why isn't the Zoning Code Amendment addressing cockfighting?

- The Zoning Code Amendment is focusing on land use compatibility concerns related to the keeping of roosters by identifying the zone districts that incidental keeping of animals, specifically roosters is permitted, the minimum lot size, the maximum number of roosters allowed, and setback requirements for coops and structures used to provide shelter.
- State and Federal laws specifically address cockfighting:
 - California Penal Code Section: 597(a), 597b(b), 597c, 597i(a), and 597j(a)
 - Title 7 of the U.S. Code Section: 2156(a)(1), 2156(b), and 2156(d)
- The County Code Amendment defines a "rooster" and "enclosure(s)" used to confine or house an adult rooster. County Code Chapter 8.22 "Keeping of Roosters" is being added to balance the legitimate interests of agricultural businesses and educational organizations with efforts to prevent rooster keeping that is environmentally damaging, inhumane, and/or conducive to illegal cockfighting.

Is the Zoning Code Amendment necessary if cockfighting is already illegal?

- Yes. The scope of the Zoning Code and County Code amendments extend beyond enforcement of illegal activities such as but not limited to cockfighting. They also aim to address broader concerns related to public health and safety (addressing public nuisances) and land use compatibility.
- The County received over 800 unique complaints between 2022 and 2025 concerning roosters—primarily related to noise, animals at large, potential cockfighting and inhumane treatment.
- See slide 2 for more information on the purpose of the Zoning Code Amendment.



Why doesn't the County just regulate roosters like they do dogs?

The Zoning Code and County Code regulate domestic pets such as dogs and cats differently than they do livestock such as roosters.

- Currently there are no regulations regarding:
 - Number of roosters that can be kept on parcels 10,000 square feet or larger in size in most zone districts (currently prohibited in RD-10 through RD-40, RM-2, O, Mixed-Use, and M-2).
 - Rooster noise in residential neighborhoods
 - Planning Director and Code Enforcement's ability to enforce Zoning Code violations pertaining to roosters and other types of crowing fowl
- The proposed Zoning Code Amendment will address these concerns while providing mechanisms that safeguard legitimate commercial poultry operations, education programs, breeders, hobbyists, independent exhibitors, and individuals maintaining poultry for other legitimate purposes as determined by the Agricultural Commissioner.

How has the County involved the public in the amendment process?

County Staff have held a number of public workshops and internal and external stakeholder meetings.

- Public Workshops
 - Agricultural Advisory Committee: December 11, 2024
 - North Highlands CPAC: August 26, 2025
 - Cosumnes CPAC: August 27, 2025
 - Carmichael CPAC: September 10, 2025
 - Countywide Community Workshop (Planning Commission): Sept 9, 2025
 - Countywide Community Workshop: November 10, 2025
 - Agricultural Advisory Committee: December 10, 2025
- Staff met with internal and external stakeholders to balance cultural, religious and individual practices with commercial agriculture, agricultural education programs, community compatibility, and public health and safety. (Slide 11)

Has County staff amended the draft Zoning Ordinance to address community concerns?

Yes.

- Based on preliminary input from the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) and commercial poultry farmers, the ZC update focuses on roosters rather than all crowing fowl. This change is backed by the types of 311 complaints received.
- The August draft ZC update incorporated information from stakeholder meetings, the AAC, surrounding counties and cities, and AB 928 that was moving through the legislation. This version was presented at four public workshops.
- The November draft ZC evaluated the public comments received in writing and at the four public workshops. In addition, staff reviewed documents from various cooperative extensions, universities, and websites regarding best management practices for flock maintenance. This version was presented at a public workshop on November 10, 2025 and to the AAC on December 10, 2025 and is the basis of the draft Ordinance being presented to the Planning Commission on February 9, 2026.
- Slides 8 and 9 summarize key changes between the August 2025 draft and the public hearing draft.

Summary of ZC Changes between August and November 2025 (Public Hearing Draft)

- Increase in the number of roosters allowed based on zone district and lot size. See slide 9 for comparison
- No longer requiring Use Permit for educational programs. (this is current ZC requirement)
- Minor/Temporary Use Permit no longer proposed for educational programs, breeders, hobbyists, and exhibitors.
- No-cost Registration process with Agricultural Commissioner is proposed. This process will allow legitimate breeders, exhibitors, hobbyists, and other groups to exceed the standard rooster limits. See slide 17 for more information on proposed registration process.
- Compliance/enforcement changed from Ordinance adoption date to complaint-driven.
- County Noise Ordinance applies in residential (RD) zones; no changes in Agricultural (AG) or Agricultural-Residential (AR) zones, which remain Right-to-Farm areas.
- All equipment, materials, and structures used for incidental animal keeping must comply with applicable development standards: Larger coop sizes permitted for larger lots; increased setbacks for neighborhood compatibility; and process for deviations.

Max Number of Roosters: Draft Zoning Code Comparison

August Draft	Public Hearing Draft
<p>AG, UR, IR, RR, AR limited to</p> <p><u>Min lot size 14,520 sf per rooster with a maximum of 5 roosters regardless of acreage.</u></p>	<p>AG, UR, IR, RR, AR, RD-1 through RD-3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10,000 sf to 1 acre: maximum five roosters. • 1 acre to 20 acres: five roosters per acre, not to exceed 15 roosters. • 20.01 acres to 40 acres: maximum of 25 roosters. • 40 acres or larger: maximum of 50 roosters
<p>RD-1 through RD-10 limited to</p> <p><u>Min lot size 14,520 sf with max 2 roosters (TUZ required).</u></p>	<p>RD-4 through RD-7:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 10,000 sf to 1 acre: maximum of 3 roosters 2. 1 acre or larger: 3 roosters, plus 1 additional rooster per 10,000 sf, not to exceed 10 roosters.

Will the County confiscate my roosters or my neighbor's roosters? How will County enforce the Zoning Code?

- As currently proposed, compliance will be **complaint-driven**, with a 30-day period to comply or register with the Agricultural Commissioner (if applicable) following written notification; additional time may be granted if owner is working towards compliance.
 - County's initial goal is education and voluntary compliance to correct the violation. If the number of roosters allowed is exceeded, the County will provide time for the owner to find new homes for the roosters, cull their flock, or other methods to reduce number of roosters so that the roosters are not illegally released.
 - When County is not able to gain voluntary compliance in a reasonable time-frame penalties and fines may be issued.
 - Decisions issued by the Planning Director are proposed to be lowered from the Board of Supervisors to the Board of Zoning Appeals resulting in a lower cost and quicker time frame for an appeal hearing.
 - No changes are proposed to the appeal process for Notices of Violation or Penalties issued by the Chief of Code Enforcement, under Section 6.6 of the Zoning Code.
- The County aims to avoid confiscation to the extent possible. In situations where there is evidence of illegal activity such as cockfighting or significant evidence of inhumane treatment, confiscation may be necessary.

How did County staff determine the number of roosters that should be allowed?

- Review of ordinances in surrounding counties and cities. Including counties with a strong agricultural presence (Yolo, Sutter and San Joaquin). See slides 13 and 14
- In addition to the public meetings (Slide 6), meetings with internal and external stakeholders to understand, and to balance cultural and individual practices alongside commercial agricultural interests, community compatibility, and public health and safety objectives.
 - Internal Stakeholders: Code Enforcement, Sheriff's Department, Animal Care Services, and the Agricultural Commissioner.
 - To understand enforcement realities, nuisance and public safety concerns, and potential impacts to commercial agricultural operations.

External Stakeholders: hobbyists, including conservationist breeders, cultural groups, and exhibitors.

- Met with conservation-oriented poultry hobbyists to better understand breeding practices that differ from conventional operations, including species such as bantams that require different rooster-to-hen ratios.

How did County staff determine the number of roosters that should be allowed? (continued)

- Met with former 4-H and FFA participants, and recent leaders to understand the needs and interests associated with educational agricultural programs.
- Met with Hmong community representatives to better understand the cultural significance of roosters, including how roosters are incorporated into cultural traditions.
- Met with representatives of the California Association for the Preservation of Gamefowl to provide an overview of the proposed amendments.
- Review of documents from various cooperative extensions, universities, and websites on flock maintenance
 - See slide 15 for a summary of flock health best management practices
 - See slide 16 for table summarizing the max number of roosters allowed by zone district and the number of hens based on best management practices
 - Note: specialty breeders with more than one species and/or conservation efforts for certain breeds may require different ratios. See exceptions and registry provisions on slide 17

Rooster Limits In Other Counties

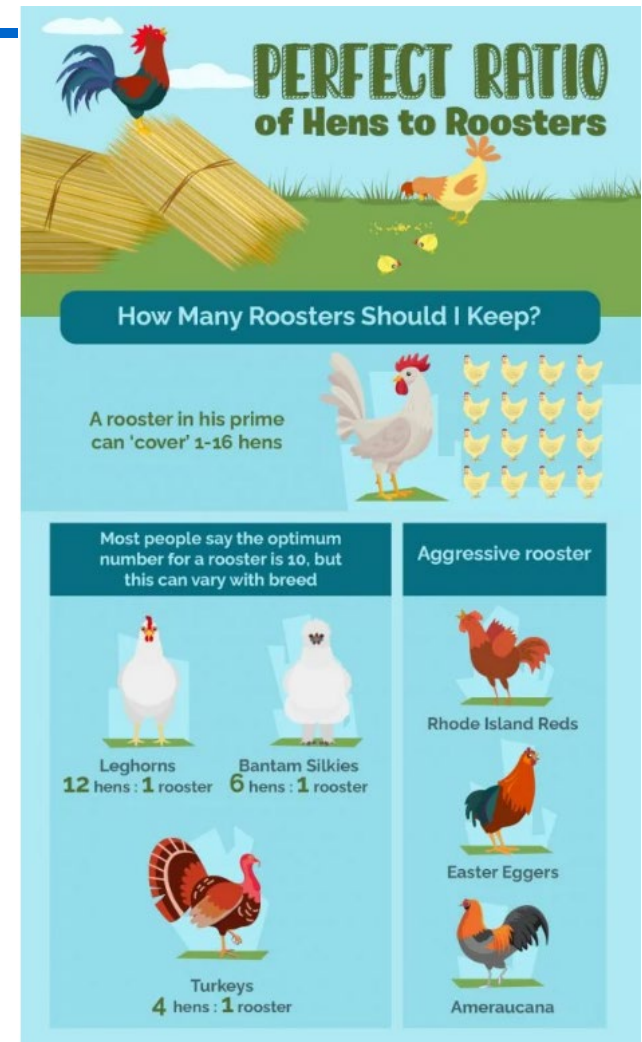
County	Minimum Lot Size to Keep Roosters	Rooster Limits
Sacramento (Current)	10,000 square feet (.23 acres) (not allowed in RD-10 through RD-40, RM-2, O, Mixed Use, and M-2 zones)	No limitation
Sacramento (Nov Proposed)	10,000 square feet for each rooster.	Up to 50 roosters in AG, AR, RD-1 through RD-3, based on parcel size. Up to 10 roosters in RD-4 through RD-7, based on parcel size. Additional allowance subject to Registration with AG Commissioners.
Yolo	> 5 acres (Agricultural/Rural zones only)	Roosters allowed only on lots <u>≥ 5 acres</u> ; each rooster counts as 4 Animal Points
El Dorado	≥ 3 acres	Roosters allowed if lot is <u>3 acres or more</u> ; prohibited on smaller lots
San Joaquin	≥ 1/3 acre	1 rooster (1/3 to <1.5 acres) 2 roosters (1.5 to <3 acres) 3 roosters (≥3 acres)
Sutter	Not allowed in R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4 zones	0 roosters allowed in these urban residential zones
Placer	> 0.5 acre (-AG zone) > 1 acre (RF zone)	Up to 24 poultry per acre; no restriction on type (roosters allowed if zone & size criteria met) Roosters prohibited in Single and Multifamily Zones

Rooster Limits In Other Cities

City	Minimum Lot Size to Keep Roosters	Rooster Limits
Sacramento County (Current)	10,000 square feet (.23 acres) (not allowed in RD-10 through RD-40, RM-2, O, Mixed Use, and M-2 zones)	No limitation
Sacramento County (Nov Proposed)	10,000 square feet for each rooster. (AG, AR, RR, RD-1 through RD-10 zones only)	Up to 50 roosters in AG, AR, RD-1 through RD-3, based on parcel size. Up to 10 roosters in RD-4 through RD-7, based on parcel size.
City of Sacramento	Roosters are not permitted on any developed lot used exclusively for residential purposes.	Prohibited
Folsom	Not more than any combination of two chickens, ducks, pigeons and/or rabbits	Up to 2.
Citrus Heights	20,000 sf or RD-1 and RD-2 zones only.	
Roseville	AG zones only	10 maximum in AG zones, prohibited in residential zones.
Elk Grove	Prohibited in RD Districts	Prohibited in RD zones.
West Sacramento	Prohibited	Prohibited

Flock Health Best Management Practices

- A range of 6 - 16 hens per rooster based on species and size of flock is adequate for flock maintenance (avg. 1:10).
- Roosters are not required for egg laying hens
 - Potential benefits: protection, increased egg production, and repopulating flock
- Too many roosters can create issues: fighting; excess mating and injury to hens; stress and anxiety among hens = lower egg production, over-eating, and increased potential for infections and other illnesses.



Number of hens required for healthy flock based on max number of roosters allowed*

AG, IR, IR, AR, RD-1through RD-3

Acreage	Max # roosters	# hens (1:10 ratio)	# Bantam hens (1:6 ratio)
10,000 sf to 1 acre	5	50	30
1-20 acres	15	150	90
20.01 to 40 acres	25	250	150
Over 40 acres	50	500	300

RD-4 through RD-7

Acreage	Max # roosters	# hens (1:10 ratio)	# Bantam hens (1:6 ratio)
10,000 to 1 acre	3	30	18
Over 1 acre	10	100	60

* Ratios may be different for specialty breeders, hobbyists, and other groups that qualify for an exception and registration with Agricultural Commissioner.

Are there exceptions to the number of roosters allowed?

- Educational programs, such as 4-H or FFA no longer require a use permit or registration.
- Specialty breeders, exhibitors or other legitimate purpose may exceed number of roosters through a simple registration process (no fee or public hearing)
 - Pre-registration is voluntary; as compliance with the Zoning Code provisions is **complaint-driven**.
 - Registration is intended to protect legitimate rooster-keeping that exceeds allowed number of roosters. Knowing where these operations exist will assist County Code Enforcement and Animal Care Officers if they receive a complaint or inquiry from sending a courtesy violation notice and/or inspection. Registration may also assist in the event of unfounded or unverified complaints.
 - Registration is intended to be a **free and simple application form**. Types of information that may be needed:
 - Number and type of animals (allows for education programs that may have animals other than roosters).
 - Size of structure to house animals.
 - How dust, odor, flies and other nuisances will be controlled.
 - Name & nature and proof of program/exhibition.
 - Site map indicating setback distances where the animals will be kept from the property line.

Can I still have egg-laying hens?

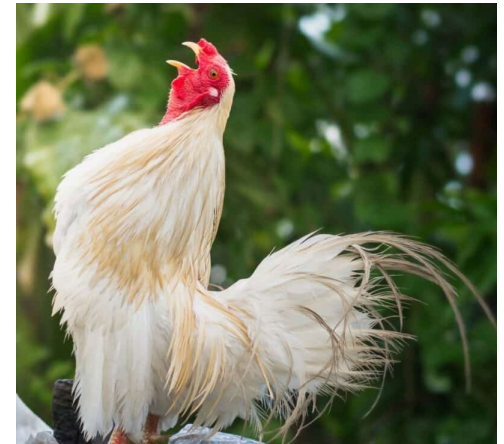
- The Zoning Code Amendment does not affect egg-laying hens or commercial poultry operations.
- The Zoning Code Amendment will allow additional flexibility for the chicken coop sizes, as the proposed amendment allows for bigger square footages of the coops, based on the lot size.



My neighbor's roosters make too much noise. Will the Zoning Code address rooster noise?



- Noise is being addressed through additional standards in residential zones, while agricultural and agricultural-residential areas remain protected under the County's Right-to-Farm ordinance.
- The Zoning Code Amendment clarifies that the incidental keeping of animal does not constitute a farm or an agricultural facility. This will allow Animal Care Services to develop noise standards for enforcement of rooster noise complaints in a similar manner as they do for barking dogs.



Still Have Questions?



- See Crowing Fowl Webpage for additional information: [Crowing Fowl Zoning Code Amendment](#)
- [Sign up to receive updates via email!](#) Make sure to select "Development Code Updates In-Progress" on the subscription topics list.
- Contact Young Choi, Associate Planner (choiy@saccounty.gov) for questions or to submit comments regarding the Zoning Code Update
- Questions regarding County Code update: Annette Bedsworth, Director of Animal Care Services (bedswortha@saccounty.gov)