



Region of Queens Land Use Planning Update

Livestock in Rural and Residential Zones

Background Report (4/7)

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Livestock in Rural and Residential Zones

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Region of Queens Land Use Planning
Update

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Planning + Design Studio

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....4

Topic Overview

Why is this a Topic of Focus?

Current State.....5

Existing Policies and Regulations

Options.....7

Create Additional Livestock Categories

Reduce Minimum Lot Size Requirements for Household Livestock Operations

Review the Limit on Fowl and Rabbits

Key Questions.....8

Questions to Consider

INTRODUCTION

Topic Overview

Although Queens contains relatively little prime agricultural land compared to other parts of Nova Scotia, agriculture remains an important part of the municipality's economy, culture, and rural character. Farming activities are particularly concentrated in areas such as Greenfield and Caledonia, where agricultural uses contribute to local food production, support rural livelihoods, and help maintain the working landscapes that are valued by residents and visitors alike.

Livestock operations form an important component of this agricultural activity. These operations can range from small household-scale farms that keep a limited number of animals to larger commercial operations.

While livestock operations play a key role in the economy, culture, and food security of Queens, they can also create impacts that need to be carefully managed. Depending on their size and location, these uses may generate unpleasant odours, and raise risks of pollution from manure storage. Because of this, municipalities

often use land use regulations to balance the benefits of agricultural activity with the need to protect neighbouring properties and environmental resources.

Why is this a Topic of Focus?

While the Municipality has long supported agricultural activity, concerns have been raised that the current regulations may be overly restrictive for smaller-scale livestock operations. In particular, some residents have expressed that they have found it difficult to meet the existing lot size and setback requirements outlined in the current planning documents.

Therefore, this project presents an opportunity to review whether the current regulations remain appropriate, particularly for household livestock operations. This includes considering whether existing requirements effectively balance the needs of farmers with the interests of neighbouring property owners and environmental protection.

Existing Policies and Regulations

The Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) and Land Use Bylaw (LUB) distinguish between two types of livestock operations based on their scale:

- + **Household Livestock Operations** contain 10 animal units or fewer.
- + **Intensive Livestock Operations** contain more than 10 animal units.

Animal units are calculated using a standardized conversion system that assigns different values to different types of livestock based on their size (see Table 1).

The table on the following page outlines the different policies and regulations that apply to both household and intensive livestock operations, highlighting the permitted zones, minimum lot size, and setback requirements (see Table 2).

In addition to these regulations, up to 10 fowl and/or rabbits may be kept without a development permit in **all zones**, subject to the following provisions:

- + where a rooster is kept, the use is regulated as a household livestock operation;
- + they are confined to the lot and not permitted to run at large;
- + coops meet zone requirements for accessory buildings;
- + their slaughtering is prohibited in certain urban zones.

Type of Livestock	Number of Livestock Equal to One Animal Unit
Cattle	1
Horse	1
Llama	1
Emu	1
Sheep	4
Goats	4
Hogs	2
Mink	1
Rabbits	25
Fowl	25

Table 1. Animal Unit Conversions from the Region of Queens Municipality Land Use Bylaw.



CURRENT STATE

	Household Livestock Operations		Intensive Livestock Operations
Permitted Zones	Residential Zones	+ General Residential (RG)	-
	Hamlet Zones	+ Hamlet Residential (HR) + Hamlet Core (HC)	-
	Rural Zones	+ Inland Rural (R5) + Coastal Rural (R6) + Rural Commercial (CR)	+ Inland Rural (R5) + Coastal Rural (R6), through development agreement
Minimum Lot Size	4,000 m ² per animal unit (or part thereof).		4 hectares.
Setback from Property Lines	Animal housing and manure storage facilities must be set back from property lines double that of the applicable zone's requirements for main buildings.		Intensive livestock buildings must be set back a minimum of 50 metres from all property lines.
Setback from Dwellings	Animal housing and manure storage facilities must be set back at least 50 metres from any off-site dwelling.		Intensive livestock buildings and waste storage facilities must be set back at least 100 metres from any off-farm dwelling
Setback from Watercourses and Wells	Animal housing and manure storage facilities must be set back at least 50 metres from watercourses and off-site wells.		Intensive livestock buildings and waste storage facilities must be set back at least 100 metres from watercourses and wells.
Setback from Institutional Uses	No specific requirement.		Intensive livestock buildings and waste storage facilities must be set back at least 100 metres from institutional uses.
Fencing Requirements	Adequate fencing must be maintained to prevent livestock from escaping, subject to the Fences and Detention of Stray Livestock Act.		No specific requirement.

Table 2. Regulations for Livestock Operations from the Region of Queen's Municipality Land Use Bylaw.

Create Additional Livestock Categories

Rather than regulating all operations as either household or intensive livestock operations, the Municipality could introduce an additional category for small commercial or hobby farm operations.

For example, a new "Small-Scale Agricultural Operation" category could be created for operations that exceed household livestock thresholds but are substantially smaller than intensive commercial farms. Different lot size requirements, setbacks, and operational standards could be established for this middle category.

This approach would provide greater flexibility by recognizing that livestock operations exist along a spectrum and that a two-tier system may not adequately reflect the variety of agricultural activities occurring within the municipality.

Reduce Minimum Lot Size Requirements for Household Livestock Operations

Another option would be to review and reduce the minimum lot area required for household livestock operations.

Currently, household livestock operations require 4,000 square metres of lot area for each animal unit. The Municipality could consider reducing this requirement, establishing a lower minimum threshold for smaller operations, or permitting a limited number of animal units regardless of lot size.

This could make household livestock operations more accessible to residents interested in hobby farming, local food production, or small-scale agricultural activities. However, this must be balanced against animal welfare and the amount of land an animal needs to live comfortably.

Review the Limit on Fowl and Rabbits

Under the existing Land Use Bylaw, property owners may keep up to 10 fowl and/or rabbits without requiring a development permit, provided certain conditions are met.

The Municipality could consider increasing this limit or establishing different limits based on lot size or zoning. For example, larger rural or hamlet properties may be able to accommodate a greater number of animals without creating impacts on neighbouring properties, while smaller residential lots may continue to be subject to lower limits.

This would recognize that small-scale poultry and rabbit keeping has become increasingly popular for local food production, self-sufficiency, and hobby farming. Because these animals generally require less space and may generate fewer impacts than larger livestock, some residents may feel that the current limit is more restrictive than necessary.

KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to Consider

As the Municipality reviews its approach to regulating livestock operations, community input will help determine how best to support agricultural activity while managing potential impacts. The following questions are intended to encourage discussion and gather feedback from residents, agricultural operators, and other stakeholders:

- + Do the current regulations strike an appropriate balance between supporting livestock operations and protecting neighbouring properties?
- + Are the current lot size requirements for household livestock operations appropriate, or should they be adjusted?
- + Should household livestock operations be permitted in additional zones, or should they remain limited to the areas where they are currently allowed?
- + Do the current regulations adequately address concerns related to animal welfare, odours, noise, manure storage, and water quality?

