



What are farm structures?

Farm structures are common agricultural structures associated with an agricultural use such as growing and harvesting crops, and raising livestock.

These structures may include:

- Barns
- Cold storages for crops grown and raised on site
- Riding arenas (riding academies)
- Slaughterhouses
- Hay or feed storage
- Livestock shelter or shade structures
- Feed or hay shelter structures
- Loafing sheds
- Poultry coop
- Farm equipment storage

Which zone classifications allow farm structures?

Your Community Plan area and Zone Classification determine whether a farm structure is allowed. Different Community Plan areas and zone classifications allow for different uses. Uses are organized into use categories, **use types**, and levels (intensities or characteristics of the use). **Below**, find the type of structure you want to build, and find its corresponding Use Type. Refer to this Use Type in your Community Plan Area Use Table.

Barns and Coops

- If agricultural activities are the main activity on the property, then barns and coops fall under the Animal Production, Boarding, and Slaughtering Use Type¹
- If agricultural activities are accessory to a residential use, then barns and coops fall under Accessory Uses²

Cold Storages fall under the Crop Production Use Type³

Riding Arenas (riding academies) fall under the Animal Production, Boarding, and Slaughtering Use Type⁴

¹ Section 18A.33.260 D – Animal Production, Boarding, and Slaughtering; [Pierce County Code Title 18A](#)

² Section 18A.36.070 – Residential Accessory Use List; [Pierce County Code Title 18A](#)

³ Section 18A.33.260 E – Crop Production; [Pierce County Code Title 18A](#)

⁴ Section 18A.33.260 D – Animal Production, Boarding, and Slaughtering; [Pierce County Code Title 18A](#)



Slaughterhouses fall under the Animal Production, Boarding, and Slaughtering Use Type⁵

Storage Buildings may be considered an accessory use. Most zone classifications allow accessory uses. Review Pierce County Code [Title 18A](#), Accessory Uses and Structures.⁶

To find out your Community Plan area and zoning, you can:

1. Open Pierce County's [About My Property](#)⁷
 - Enter a parcel number or site address
 - Find your Community Plan area and zoning in the Results Box
2. Use [this form](#) to have Planning and Land Services staff help you
3. Call the Development Center at (253) 798-3739

Is a building permit required for farm structures?

Most likely. The Development Center issues building permits and enforces standards for farm structures. An [Affidavit](#) is required for agricultural structures that are exempt from a building permit.

Agricultural structures may be exempt from a building permit when ALL of the following requirements are met:

- Be 600 square feet in size or less.
- Be built to the latest version of the International Residential Code and International Building and Fire Code.
- Adhere to all applicable Pierce County, State and Federal regulations or ordinances.
- Be located on land where agriculture activities are allowed.
- Be located on a parcel equal to or greater than 5 acres. A maximum of two exempt structures per parcel is allowed.
- Be a one-story detached accessory agriculture building. An agriculture building is defined as follows: AGRICULTURAL BUILDING (Barn) (International Building code Section 202) designed and constructed to house farm implements, hay, grain, poultry, livestock or other horticultural products. This structure shall not be a place of human habitation or a place of employment where agricultural products are processed, treated or packaged, nor shall it be a place used by the public.⁸
- Comply with setback requirements (PCC Title 18A).

⁵ Section 18A.33.260 D – Animal Production, Boarding, and Slaughtering; [Pierce County Code Title 18A](#)

⁶ Section 18A.36.070 – Residential Accessory Use List; [Pierce County Code Title 18A](#)

⁷ <https://palsonline.co.pierce.wa.us/palsonline/#/AboutMyProperty>

⁸ Farm implements may include farm vehicles as identified under RCW 46.16A.080(A) and be registered per RCW 46.16A.420



- Maintain a minimum distance of 10 feet between other detached structures in order to meet County Fire Code.

NOTE: The property owner must certify through an [Affidavit](#) recorded on title that the exempt structure meets the listed criteria and that the building meets the requirements of an agricultural building as defined in the International Building Code. A scaled site plan must be included and recorded with the affidavit. For more information, please review the [Agriculture Structure Exemption from Building Permits Bulletin](#) and the [Ordinance](#).

Depending on the size and location of your structure, it may also need **a site development permit, a critical area review, or both**. For help with building permits, please contact the [Development Center](#).

What are the required setbacks for farm structures?

As a principal use, barns, stables, riding arenas, cages, coops, or similar animal enclosures shall be set back 45 feet from any adjacent property line.⁹ As an accessory use, the setback depends on the animal type (e.g. poultry); please refer to Pierce County Code [Title 18A](#), Residential Accessory Use List for more information. Sites containing [critical areas](#) may require larger setbacks.

Cold storages, slaughterhouses, and storage buildings must be set back according to your underlying Zone Classification. To find the required setbacks either:

- Find your Zone Classification, then refer to Table 18A.15.040 in Pierce County Code [Title 18A](#), Setback and Height;¹⁰ or
- Contact or visit the [Development Center](#) for assistance.

For help or more information:

- Submit an online question at [Ask the Development Center](#)
- Ask a question using [Live Chat](#)
- Call the Development Center at (253) 798-3739
- Visit the Development Center, Monday – Friday between 9 am and 2 pm, at 2401 South 35th Street, Tacoma, WA 98409

*Please have the parcel number or site address on hand. You can find your parcel number and additional site information by visiting [About My Property](#).*¹¹

⁹ (Section 18A.15.040 i.) – Animal Enclosures Where Animals are Raised for Commercial Use Not Associated with a Primary Residence, [Pierce County Code Title 18A](#)

¹⁰ Section 18A.15.040 – Setback and Height, [Pierce County Code Title 18A](#)

¹¹ <https://palsonline.co.pierce.wa.us/palsonline/#/AboutMyProperty>



This is a reference tool only, and is not a substitute for codes and zoning regulations. You must ensure that your project meets the requirements of all applicable codes and regulations.

