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 Type

- If agricultural activities are accessory to a residential use, then barns and coops fall under Accessory Uses

**Cold Storages** fall under the Crop Production Use Type

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

---

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 Type.

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

To find out your Community Plan area and zoning, you can:
1. Open Pierce County's About My Property
   - 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.
- 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 http://yakima.co.pierce.wa.us/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. 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; 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.

---

9 Section 18A.45.020 – Agricultural Uses and Animals; Pierce County Code Title 18A
10 Section 18A.15.040 – Setback and Height; Pierce County Code Title 18A
11 http://yakima.co.pierce.wa.us/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.