

KNOW YOUR LEGAL LIMIT

By Quixote Humane, Inc.

There may be no limit to the love you have for your pets, but your neighbor may not feel so enamored. And, though “good fences make good neighbors” distance helps by buffering the noise, smell, and real or perceived threats that create a nuisance from our animal companions.

A “nuisance” is defined in most local ordinances and, as in the case of Bosque Farms, may be the only means used to address animal complaints. Other municipalities, like Los Lunas and Belen, have a limit on the number of dogs and cats that are allowed at a residence. Some municipalities do not allow livestock or fowl within the limits of their jurisdiction.

Adding to the confusion are: the varying definitions of “wildlife” and “exotic” animals, as well as, what permits and confinement requirements must be met to keep them. State and Federal regulations control most of these, but consider the crossover pets and livestock such as: emu, bison, sugar gliders, pythons, wolf-hybrids, peacocks, bengal cats, parrots, etc.

Home owners associations, mobile home parks and landlords make it even more difficult to know what - and how many of the “whats” you can keep on your property!

The reason all of these ordinances, regulations, and rules are put in place is to help keep peace within a community, protect the health and welfare of the people and the animals living near them. There is no “one size fits all” solution that can apply to the varied population densities and a communities own sense of urban/rural/country, or even wilderness.

The simple fact is that you need to find out what the limits are where you live. Like it or not, if you do not comply, you may have to go to court, pay fines, and even surrender your excess or unauthorized pets.

Of course, if you are already over the number or kinds of pets allowed where you live there is little you can do to keep your animals. Some areas have a variance permit for additional

animals, exotics, kennels, etc. with stipulations such as inspections, confinement restrictions, and fees. If you are planning to move be sure to check with the authorities in that area to make sure you will not be breaking their laws.

Each pet owner is responsible for knowing the legal limits where they live. Though it is sometimes difficult to get the answer, it is vital that you be aware of all of the local laws concerning pet ownership and care. State and local statues, regulations and ordinances are subject to change, so it is also important that you stay informed.

Every community can create an environment that supports responsible pet ownership and breeding, protects our animals from abuse, and keeps harmony with our neighbors, through legislation consistent with the needs of that community and stringent enforcement of their animal control laws.

Animal control ordinances in Valencia County are confusing because of the patchwork of municipalities, unincorporated areas, and Isleta lands. Each has it’s own set of ordinances that address animal control issues.

Reading a local ordinance does not give the full picture of what is and is not allowed where you live. Most of these ordinances do not include federal and state regulations in their language. Home owners in devolvements and mobile home parks need to find out what further restrictions are in place in their neighbor hood. Renters must read their rental agreement very carefully to see what their landlord will allow and what additional fees are involved..

State and federal restrictions on wildlife, exotics and breeding are not well defined in any of the local ordinances. Belen and Los Lunas have clear limits on the numbers of animals allowed in their ordnance, but do not address exotics very well. Valencia County has animal limits, but they are in the Planning and Zoning ordinance and it is difficult to interpret because it is based on livestock and pet units per square footage of unimpervious surface. Bosque Farms has recently added language about wildlife ownership but does not have animal limits, per se.

The animals pictured below are only available for three days, but there are plenty of other choices! Visit the Valencia County Shelter, 1209 NM 314, one mile south of Main Street in Los Lunas. Open 8:00 am - 4:00 pm Tues - Sat. 866-2479