

The ABCs of Kennel Planning

Dream kennels aren't built in a day. Focus on essentials first.

Alice Bixler

Perhaps you've raised, trained, shown and even bred a few dogs and you're beginning to feel your hobby has outgrown your house. Is it time to consider a kennel? While the idea definitely has appeal, don't dive into the project until you have all the facts at your fingertips.

Zoning

The first priority is finding out which restriction and laws apply to your proposed kennel. Do not--repeat, do not--call the zoning office and ask questions. Instead, go in person and read the laws for yourself. Get a copy of those which are applicable. If you are buying property, do not rely on realtors to check on the zoning laws for you. The prospect of killing a sale may cause them to be less than totally truthful. Again, look it up yourself. While you're at it, look for loopholes. Finding a ban on permanent kennel structures, one enterprising dog owner converted a trailer. There's nothing permanent about that as long as it's on wheels. A thorough check before you start could save you time, money and possible aggravation later.

Some people might harbor the idealistic attitude that a move to the rural countryside means a lack of the restrictions imposed in suburbia. Not necessarily. Check it out. You just might find you can keep all the cattle or hogs you want but are limited to three dogs.

Housing Options

Say "kennel" and the image of a neat and efficient building with indoor and outdoor runs, heating and air-conditioning, a raised tub, sinks and a host of other niceties pops to mind. But kennels come in all sizes and shapes, limited only by imagination and money. One of the easiest and most inexpensive solutions is a dog room--a spare room in your home, preferably with access to the outdoors. Set up with crates, pens or partitions and equipped with dog-proof flooring, this arrangement keeps the dogs contained while still having them within sight and sound of family living so they don't feel isolated. There is no added expense for heating or air-conditioning either because your dogs get to enjoy the same temperatures you do.

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