

## FARM PRACTICE

## STRUCTURES

### Description

Farm structures may be used to house livestock, grow farm products, protect equipment and farm supplies, and store wastes.

Barns are usually large buildings used to house livestock. Livestock are housed for a number of reasons: to shelter animals from the elements, to make animal handling more convenient, and to increase productivity and efficiency.

Barn design varies throughout the province. Specific designs depend on the type and quantity of livestock to be housed, the space they require, and the local climate. Barns can be built of various construction materials. The environment within a barn can be controlled by natural or mechanical ventilation. Appropriate methods of collecting and removing wastes generated within a barn must be included in an overall design. Wastes may be handled as a solid, semi-solid, or liquid.

Farm buildings are given separate attention within the *National Building Code of Canada*. This status arises from the fact that they are typically subject to a low human occupancy load, are often located in remote areas, and are often special in nature with respect to the occupancies involved. Implications of the separate status afforded agricultural buildings are published in the *National Farm Building Code of Canada*. The *Code* sets out minimum requirements in matters affecting human health, fire safety and structural sufficiency. *The British Columbia Building Code* requires all farm buildings within municipal districts to conform to the national code. Farm buildings outside municipal and regional district jurisdiction are exempt.

Any activity designated as a farm use or other use permitted in the ALR includes the construction, maintenance and operation of a building, structure, driveway, ancillary service or utility necessary for that use.

### Activities and Operations

#### Feed Mills

Livestock producers may mix their own feeds using an on-farm feed mill. Mixing is usually conducted during working hours.

#### Livestock

Livestock may be kept in barns year-round or kept on pasture or range during the late spring, summer or early fall months. Barns can be naturally or mechanically ventilated. Most large-animal structures are naturally ventilated whereas many poultry barns are typically mechanically ventilated. Barns located close to neighbours' residences should have their fans hooded to direct exhaust air down towards the

ground. Exhaust fans should be located on the sides of buildings facing away from urban dwellings. For livestock or poultry kept outdoors, confinement with adequate fencing is essential.

See also Farm Practices: [Animal Care and Handling](#)  
[Farmstead Maintenance](#)  
[Livestock at Large](#)  
[Ventilation](#)

## Related Farm Practices

Other farm practices that pertain to structures include, but are not limited to, the following.

### Manure Storage and Use

Wastes generated by farm animals must be removed on a regular basis from the barn and any nearby additional housing or exercise areas. Wastes can be transferred to a storage area separate from the barn or contained in a storage structure underneath the barn. Bedded packs are often considered solid manure storage areas until the spent bedding is removed for interim storage elsewhere or for land application.

See also Farm Practices: [Farmstead Refuse](#)  
[Manure Storage and Use](#)

## Legislation

Information on federal and provincial legislation can be found in Appendices B and C. Acts, regulations and bylaws that regulate or may affect structures use include, but are not limited to, the following.

### Federal Legislation

The *National Farm Building Code of Canada* governs structural design, fire safety and health considerations in farm buildings.

### Provincial Legislation

The *British Columbia Building Code* provides jurisdictional authority for farm buildings to be designed and constructed under the *National Farm Building Code of Canada*.

### Local Government Legislation

Most farm building construction in regulated areas of the province are subject to applicable local government building bylaws and permits.

## Publications

Publications that provide further information on structures include, but are not limited to, the following. Refer to Appendix D for details.

*Agricultural Building Setbacks from Watercourses in Farming Areas*

*British Columbia Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Guide*

*National Farm Building Code of Canada*

*On-Farm Food Safety*

*Siting and Management of Dairy Barns and Operations*

*Siting and Management of Poultry Barns*

The Ministry of Agriculture provides useful information on structures design and farmstead planning considerations. These are available in the form of farm building plans, fact sheets and other publications. In addition, the Canada Plan Service offers publications and plans for those contemplating farm building construction.