

Proposed Legislation on Legalizing Miniature Goats

ENVIRONMENT, EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND UTILITIES (EEMU) COMMITTEE, 9/14/07

What is the definition of a miniature goat?

“Miniature Goat” refers to those types of goats commonly known as pygmy, dwarf, or miniature goats.

What does the proposed legislation do?

This is a proposal to amend the City’s Land Use Code to allow the keeping of miniature goats and providing for the licensing and licensing fees.

- **Miniature goats would be permitted outright as small animals in all zones subject to the standards of the code.**
- **Miniature goats would be required to be licensed, and the fees are established in the proposed legislation.**
- **Male miniature goats would be required to be neutered and all miniature goats dehorned.**
- **Nursing offspring of miniature goats licensed according to the provisions of this Code would be able to be kept without a license until they are weaned, no longer than 12 weeks from birth.**
- **It would become unlawful for miniature goats to leave the owner’s premises except for purposes of transport or when on property other than that of the miniature goat’s owner with the permission of a lawful occupant of that property.**
- **Miniature goats would now be included in codes relating to offenses related to animal licensing and penalties.**

What are the licensing fees proposed?

Miniature goats would be required to be licensed. The annual fee would be \$20. The annual fee with a 12 month renewal would be \$30.

What are the benefits of owning miniature goats?

1. **Miniature goats are considered excellent pets due to their good-natured personalities, friendliness, faithfulness, hardiness and docility. They form close bonds with other goats, people and even family pets. There are numerous organizations worldwide that promote miniature goats as pets.**
2. **Miniature goats can be a sound way to provide milk and cheese to families if the milk is properly pasteurized prior to consumption or cheese production.**
3. **Miniature goats are an ecologically effective browser and are valuable for controlling weeds and clearing brush and undergrowth.**
4. **Miniature goats are small in stature, typically no bigger than a number of species of dogs. They average around 24” tall and weigh around 50-100 pounds.**
5. **Miniature goats can adapt to virtually all climates and have limited space needs.**

What are the potential issues and how are these addressed?

1. Public health:
Serious illnesses due to infections from goats are rare. Miniature goats do not commonly carry diseases, such as rabies, that are problematic for humans. Miniature goats can carry E. coli O157:H7, and these infections are due to fecal-oral transmission and infections associated with the consumption of unpasteurized goat milk or cheese. Since the goats will be required to stay on private property this risk is minimized. As with all animal ownership it is important for animal owners to use good hygiene and husbandry practices in caring for their pets. These risks can also be mitigated through education of goat owners and prospective goat owners in ways to prevent disease transmission. Sanitation and disease prevention information can be developed by Public Health-Seattle and King County. Public Health along with WSU King County Extension, Seattle Animal Shelter and other organizations like Seattle Tilth could post this information on their websites and in print materials. Public Health has confirmed that they would develop this material and post it on their website should this legislation be approved.

2. Noise:
Miniature goats are not particularly noisy. They sleep in a shed all night so noise at night is unlikely.
3. Control:
Even though miniature goats could be leash-walked and are good-natured around people they could create problems in public places since they like to eat plants. It could be difficult to control what they eat in an open environment. This legislation would require the goats to stay on their owner's premises except for purposes of transport, for example trips to the veterinarian, or on property other than that of the miniature goat's owner with the permission of a lawful occupant of that property.
4. Smell:
Non-neutered male goats are known to produce a strong smell. This legislation would require that male goats be neutered, thereby minimizing this strong odor.
5. Public safety:
There are no significant public safety issues regarding goats. Miniature goats are not known to be aggressive.



Photos courtesy of the National Pygmy Goat Association

