



BARC Animal Shelter and Adoptions

Chapter 6 Code of Ordinances Proposed Changes

Frequently Asked Questions



1. Why is BARC proposing changes to Chapter 6?

Chapter 6 of the City of Houston Code of Ordinances (“Code”) applies to animals or property found or located within the corporate limits of the city. Chapter 6 was last amended in May 2014. Since that time, substantial changes in State law have been passed—most recently Senate Bill 5 in the 87th legislative session, third special session—as well as improvements in animal licensing and tracking technology have been developed. The new State laws include revisions to aggressive and dangerous dog procedures, dog restraint standards for sheltering outside animals, and mandated access to clean drinking water and adequate shelter always for outside animals.

The Chapter 6 ordinance changes bring Houston into compliance with state law as well as incorporate technological changes, such as microchip solutions, and correct ordinance scrivener’s errors from previous amendments.

2. How will these new changes impact Houston pet owners?

The proposed amendments include mandatory microchipping for all owned animals which would eliminate the traditional rabies tag, replacing it with a microchip. A City pet license will still be required; however, rather than issuing a physical metal tag for the pet’s collar – which can easily be lost or damaged – BARC will use the microchip number as the proof of licensing. The microchips will expedite the return of lost animals to their owners. Mandatory microchipping will not be required for non-residents who are staying less than 30 days or for temporary caretakers of lost or abandoned animals.

3. Do these changes incorporate proposals from animal advocates regarding pet stores?

Yes, currently there are no prohibitions on pet stores in Houston. The proposed amendments would require all pet stores located within the city limits to sell only dogs and cats sourced from a humane organization or a municipal/county animal shelter. A humane organization is a not-for-profit organization that does not breed animals or does not obtain a dog or cat from a person or organization that breeds or sells animals.

4. How will this amendment affect *existing* pet stores in Houston?

Although this provision will be effective immediately for any *new* entrant to the Houston market, existing pet stores will be given one year to come into compliance.

5. How do the proposed amendments address animal enforcement and the City’s stray population?

Mandatory microchipping will allow BARC – or any other humane organization that finds a stray animal or lost pet – to scan the animal and return it to its owner immediately, eliminating the need to bring the animal to the shelter for intake and care.

Additionally, the proposed changes streamline and strengthen the process for dangerous dog designations and rabies evaluations

The amendment would also reduce the stray hold from 72 to 48 hours for animals without a microchip and would require that all animals be sterilized before leaving BARC.

6. What changes are being proposed for the standards for animals that are kept outdoors?

BARC proposes amending Chapter 6 to incorporate the new standards established by Senate Bill 5, which was approved by the Texas Legislature during the third special session of the 87th legislative session. The bill requires that the animal must always have access to clean drinking water and “adequate shelter.” The amendment more clearly defines “adequate shelter” as a structure that is:

- Clean
- Of sturdy construction
- Large enough for the animal to stand, sit, turn around, and lie down normally.

In addition, adequate shelter:

- Provides protection from wind, rain, snow, sleet, and subfreezing temperatures
- Provides protection from direct sunlight
- Allows the animal to avoid standing water
- Provides sufficient shelter for each animal appropriate to the species.