

Neenah sets limits for animals

Author: Behnke, Duke

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Abstract:

Neenah wouldn't allow any poisonous animals, including rear-fanged snakes; apes, chimpanzees, gorillas or orangutans; baboons; bears; cheetahs; crocodilians longer than 30 inches; constrictor snakes longer than 6 feet; coyotes; gamecocks and other fighting birds; hyenas; jaguars; leopards; lions; lynxes; ostriches; pumas; sharks; snow leopards; tigers; poisonous insects; or wolves.

Full text:

Post-Crescent staff writer

Pot-bellied pigs are in, pumas are out as pets in Neenah under a proposed ordinance that would limit the types, numbers and combinations of animals residents would be allowed to keep.

Residents would be limited to no more than six animals under the plan, and no baboons, hyenas, ostriches or snow leopards would be allowed. Fish kept in an aquarium would not be limited.

The ordinance restricts the number of animals per kind to three, except for chickens and other fowl, in which case the limit is four.

That means residents couldn't legally keep four dogs or four cats at their home, but they could have three dogs and three cats, or they could have four chickens, a dog and a Vietnamese pot-bellied pig.

The Common Council will consider the ordinance at 7 p.m. Wednesday at City Hall, 211 Walnut St.

Neenah resident Jack Zolkowski keeps five Pomeranian dogs known as the Soda Pups -- Dr Pepper, Squirt, Sierra Mist, Ginger Ale and Root Beer -- and shows the dogs at libraries, schools, hospitals and nursing homes around the state. He called the proposed ordinance "an absolute nightmare."

"The city's going to make me get rid of two of them?" Zolkowski asked. "My dogs are like my children. I love them with that type of immenseness."

City Atty. Jim Godlewski drafted the regulations to clarify and strengthen Neenah's control of animals.

"Sometimes it astounds me that people think they can have a small farm within the city," Godlewski said. "It just doesn't work when you have neighbors and other people around."

Godlewski said Appleton limits the number of animals to six per household. Menasha limits the total number of dogs and cats to four but allows as many as 12 if the owner obtains approval from 80 percent of neighbors within 200 feet of the property.

Neenah has an ordinance that limits residents to keeping four chickens (no roosters), but the ordinance doesn't set limits for other fowl or doves. Last year a resident on Doty Island registered four chickens, three ducks, three geese, three pigeons, three guinea hens, three peacocks and three turkeys.

"The changes would make it clear that no more than four chickens, doves or other fowl per household are allowed," Godlewski said.

The ordinance specifies animals that would be prohibited within city limits. The city's current animal ordinance lacks such a list.

Neenah wouldn't allow any poisonous animals, including rear-fanged snakes; apes, chimpanzees, gorillas or orangutans; baboons; bears; cheetahs; crocodilians longer than 30 inches; constrictor snakes longer than 6 feet; coyotes; gamecocks and other fighting birds; hyenas; jaguars; leopards; lions; lynxes; ostriches; pumas; sharks; snow leopards; tigers; poisonous insects; or wolves.

The city also wouldn't allow farm animals like cows, donkeys, goats, horses, mules, pigs, ponies or sheep, or any animal raised for fur-bearing purposes.

Vietnamese pot-bellied pigs would be allowed, but only one per household.

The limits on the number of animals (three per kind and six per household) would apply to pets that are 4 months or older, so if a cat has a litter of four kittens, the owner has time to give some away.

Neenah's ordinance would create a separate license requirement for dogs that are declared a danger for an unprovoked attack. The license would require that the owner implant a microchip in the dog, obtain at least \$1 million in liability insurance and post a notice at the entrances to the premises where the dog is kept.

"It's a tough ordinance for people who have dogs that have a propensity for viciousness," Godlewski said.

Under the current law, a "two-bite" rule applies, meaning that before an action can be brought against a dog, it must have bitten twice and the owner must have had notice before the second bite.

The proposed ordinance gives the police chief the authority to declare a dog dangerous after one bite -- or without any bite -- if the dog behaves in a manner that poses an imminent threat.

-- Duke Behnke: 920-729-6622, ext. 32, or dbehnke@postcrescent.com

Reported animal bites in Neenah

2009: 36 dog bites and 13 cat bites or scratches

2010: 39 dog bites and five cat bites or scratches

2011: 33 dog bites and nine cat bites or scratches

Source: City of Neenah

Animal restrictions at a glance

Appleton: Each household can have up to six animals.

Menasha: Residents can have no more than four cats or dogs per household unless they received approval from 80 percent of neighbors within 200 feet of the property, in which case the limit is 12.

Animals banned in proposed Neenah ordinance

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