

Pet Businesses & Public Health

Healthy Pets, Healthy People

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King County Board of Health Briefing
September 18, 2025

Public Health
Seattle & King County

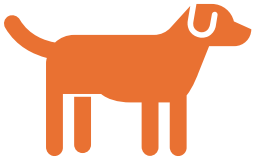


Agenda

- What are Zoonotic Diseases?
- Zoonotic Diseases & Pet Businesses
- Public Health's Pet Business Program
- Planned BOH Code Updates
- Next Steps for Code Updates



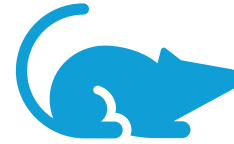
Board of Health Title 8: Zoonotic Disease Prevention



Pet Business
Regulations



Rabies



Rodent Control

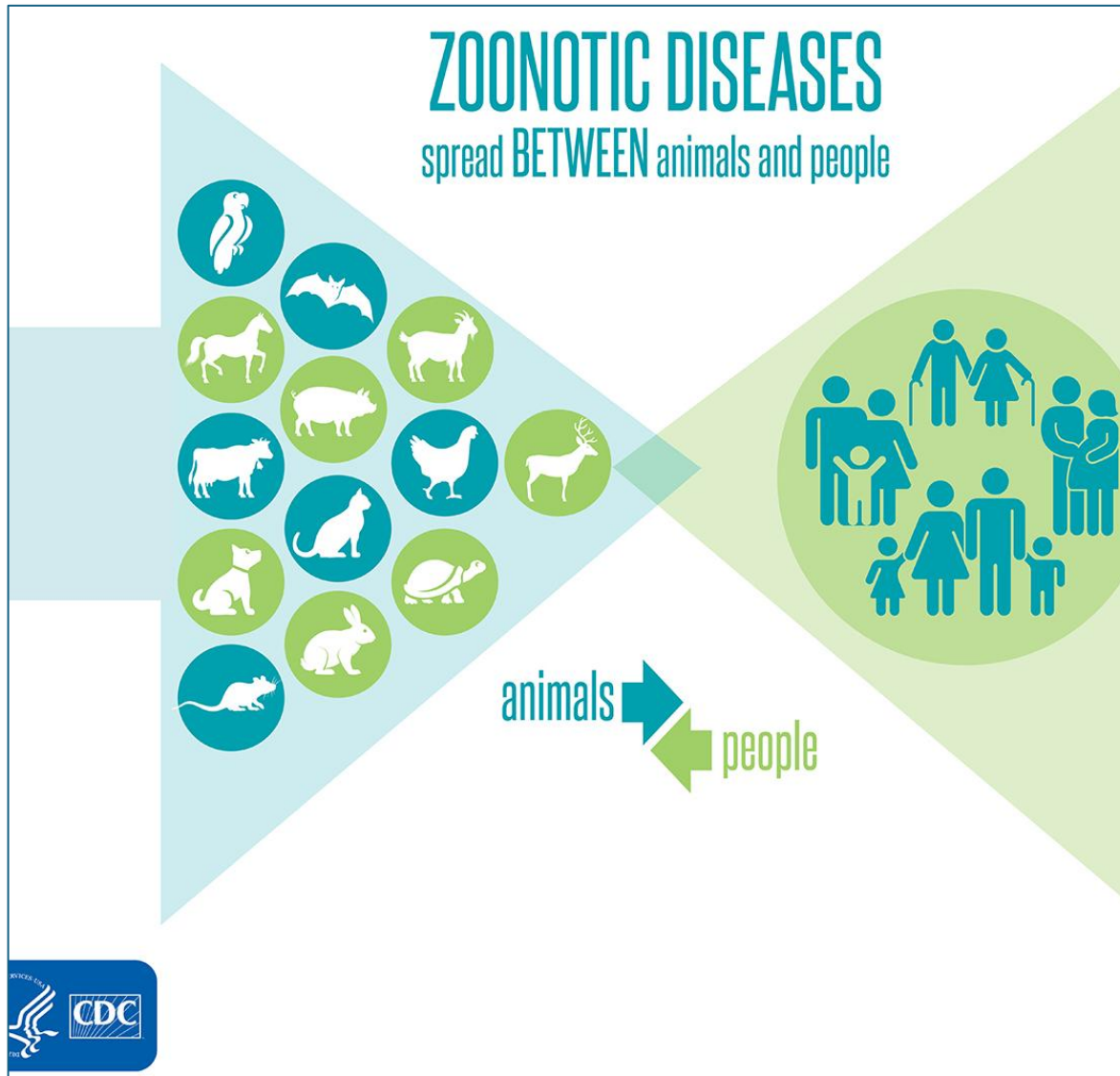
Zoonotic diseases – where they come from and why they matter

- **Animals that carry zoonotic diseases include** birds, poultry, dogs, cats, pocket pets (gerbils, hamsters, etc.), ferrets, reptiles.

Pet food is also a source.

- **Examples of zoonotic diseases:** Salmonella, *E.coli*, ringworm, psittacosis, leptospirosis, parasites
- **Each year in the US, animal contact is associated with**
 - 450,000 gastro-intestinal illnesses, resulting in:
 - 5,000 hospitalizations
 - 70+ deaths





How zoonotic diseases spread

- Direct contact with animals
- From pet foods and treats
- Contaminated surfaces, environment
- Animals under stress

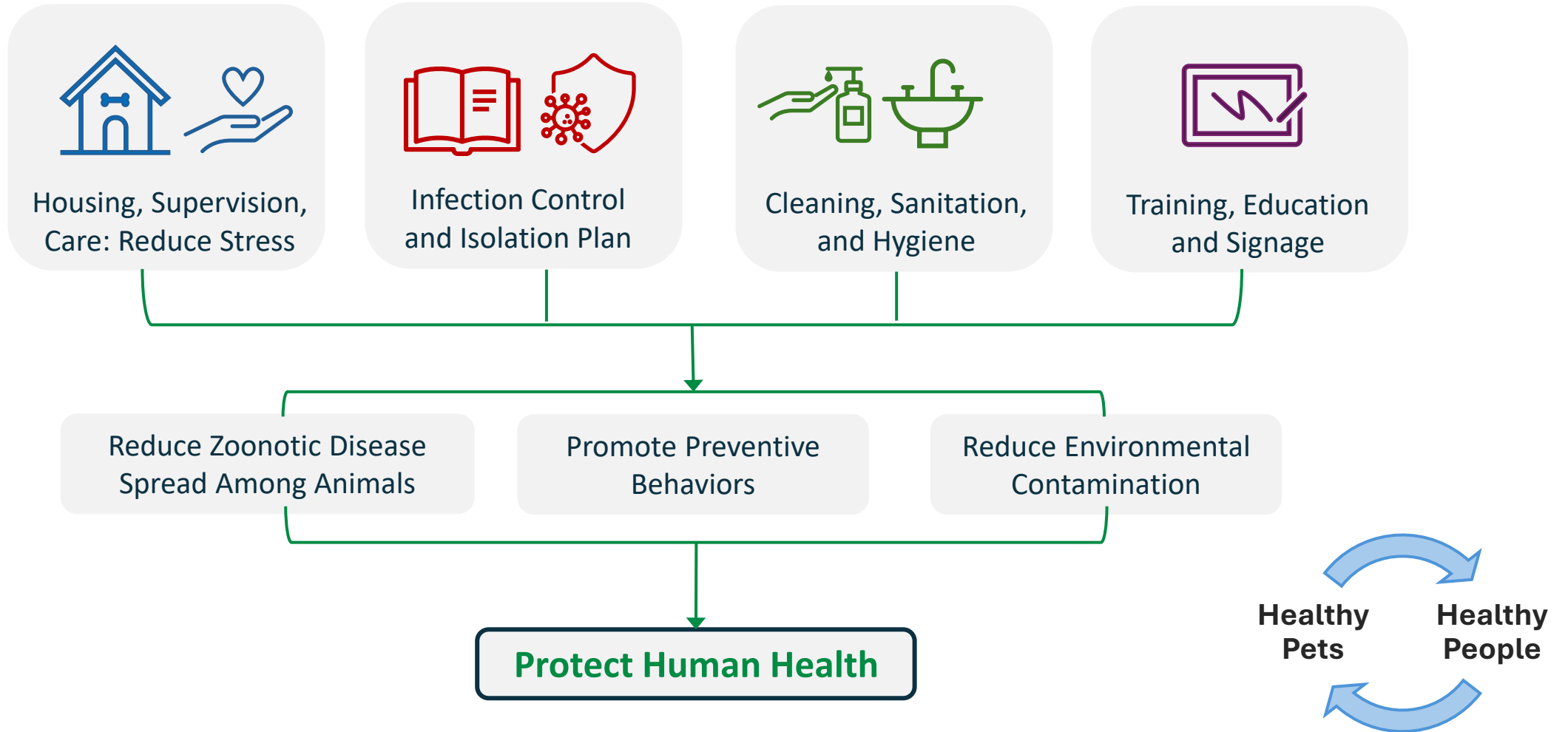
Importance for public health

- 75% of emerging diseases (bird flu)
- 61% of households own pets*
- 12% own exotic pets*
- Backyard (pet) poultry trend
- Emerging animal business models

Populations at higher risk

- Children younger than 5 years
- Adults older than 65 years
- People with weakened immune systems
- Pregnant people

Why is this Public Health?





Pet Business Program

We provide regulatory oversight of pet business with a focus on disease prevention through performing:

- Plan review
- Inspections
- Technical assistance
- Complaint response
- Compliance for unpermitted businesses

Permitted Pet Businesses in King County

More than 500 pet business permits



Live Animal Retailers
(48)



Pet Services
(429)



Pet Shelters & Adoption
Centers (32)

Note: We know there are a significant number of unpermitted businesses, as the industry is becoming more popular and gig-economy apps make pet services more accessible.

Public Health Code Fills a Critical Gap

No single agency oversees the full scope of pet business operations

Agency Partners in Animal Health and Safety

PHSKC

- Public health, sanitation, disease prevention, facility conditions
- Applies to pet boarding, daycares, shelters, groomers, pet shops, etc.

Animal Control

- Animal cruelty, dangerous dogs, pet licensing
- Varies by city; not consistently applied countywide

WSDA

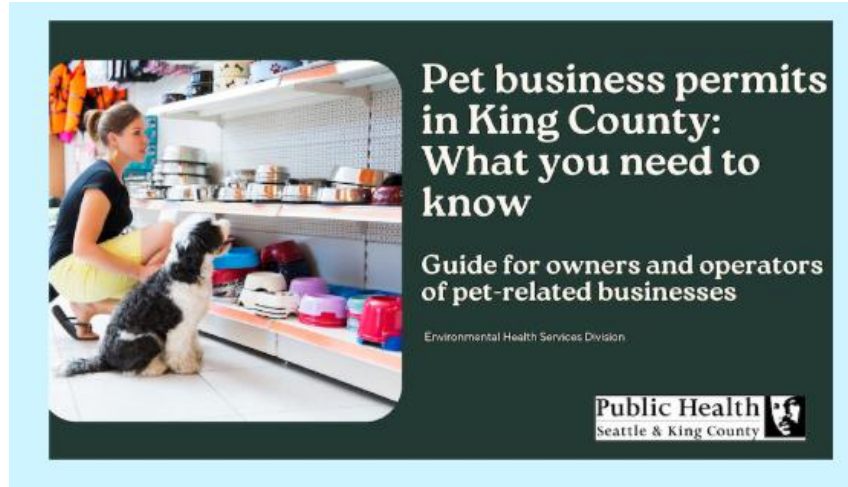
- Animal import/export
- Pet food labeling
- Does not regulate care or housing of pets in businesses
- Pet food retail oversight is limited

USDA

- Imports and interstate pet sales (e.g., breeders shipping across state lines)
- Animal exhibitors (birds and bunnies)
- Animal Welfare Act-Federal

Pet Business Resources

Webpages resources and guides



Survey of Customer Experience

> [J Public Health Manag Pract](#). 2016 May-Jun;22(3):301-8. doi: 10.1097/PHH.0000000000000272.

Acceptance, Benefits, and Challenges of Public Health-Oriented Pet Business Regulations in King County, Washington

Janelle Wierenga ¹, Hanne Thiede, Leah Helms, Sharon Hopkins

Affiliations + expand

PMID: 26020600 DOI: [10.1097/PHH.0000000000000272](#)

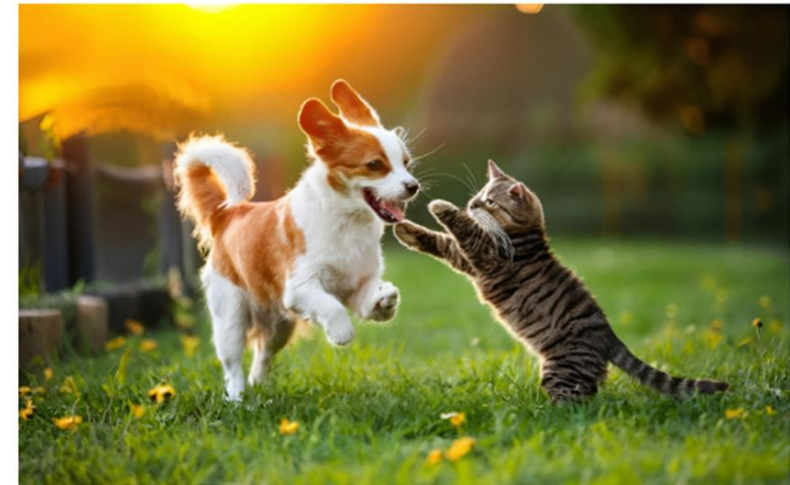
Abstract

Context: New regulations were implemented in King County, Washington, in 2010 requiring pet businesses to obtain a permit from Public Health-Seattle & King County (Public Health) and undergo

Blog guidance for pet owners

HOW TO CHOOSE A PET CARE FACILITY

March 18, 2025. Reading time 8 minutes.



We love our pets here in King County. With some of the highest pet ownership rates in the country,

Why update the code?

- Code established in **2010** code merger project with City of Seattle, King County, and Public Health codes.
- **No substantial reviews or revisions** since the code was established.



Pet Business Program Challenges

The program is not scaled to the number & complexity of King County pet businesses

Limited staffing



Education and outreach are underfunded



Pet industry is growing and evolving



Code Update: Priority Policy Areas



Updating and Streamlining Regulations



Strengthening Compliance and Enforcement



New and Emerging Business Models



Prioritizing Zoonotic Disease Prevention



Enhancing Consumer Protection and Transparency



Protecting Health through the Environment



Financial Sustainability and Program Capacity

Engagement



Planned Engagement

Now

Monthly public office hours

2026

Industry specific and general engagement meetings

Targeted outreach to small industry groups



What we have heard

Concerns about cost

Confusion about definitions and requirements (e.g., Boarding and Daycare)

Strong interest in transparent communication



How we will use feedback

Informing proposed fee structure and guidance

Adjusting code language for clarity

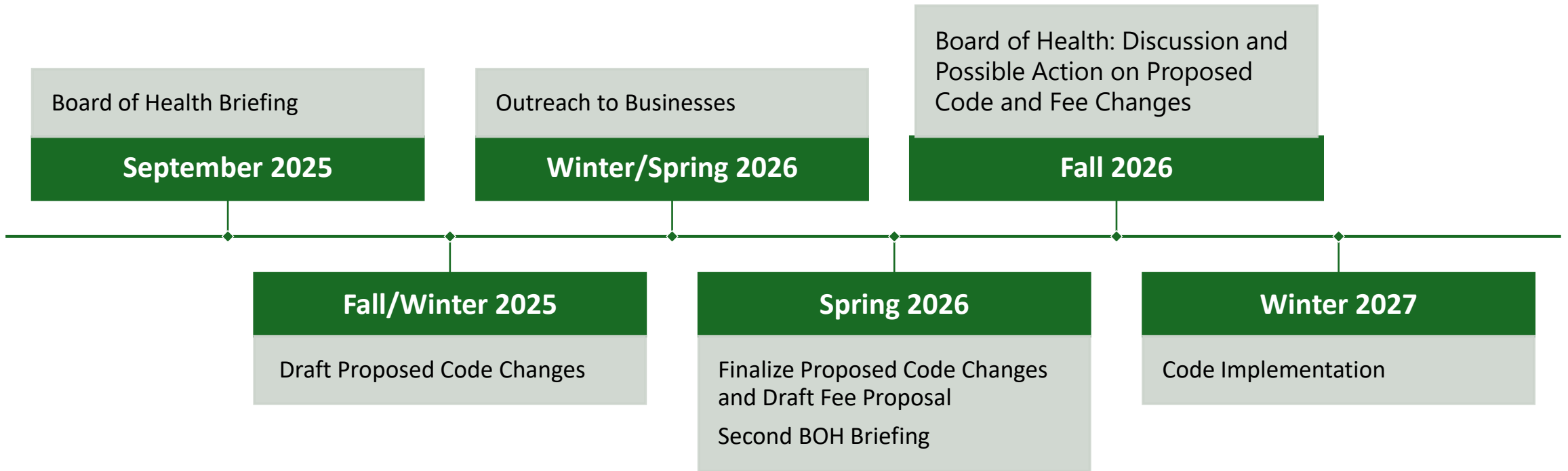


Equity

Reducing burden to business where feasible

Centering voices from small businesses

Next Steps



Thank You!

Questions? Contact
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