



The Requirements to Operate a Boarding Kennel in New Jersey June 2016

The New Jersey Department of Health, Communicable Disease Service, Office of Animal Welfare received a request for guidance as to whether the boarding of dogs in private residences for a fee is considered operation of a kennel. Several web-based services (e.g., dogvacay.com, rover.com) facilitate peer-to-peer business transactions for home-based dog boarding, as well as other services.

Statutorily, a “Kennel” is defined as any establishment wherein or whereon the business of boarding or selling dogs or breeding dogs for sale is carried on, except for a pet shop. “Boarding” is defined in regulation as the act of providing food and shelter to dogs regardless of whether it involves an overnight stay, for a fee, at the request of the owner or caretaker. Therefore, a boarding kennel would be any establishment where dogs are provided with food and shelter for a fee at the request of the dogs’ owners and would include persons who board dogs for a fee in their homes.

In order for individuals to legally board dogs in their home, they must apply to the municipal government for a license to operate as a kennel. Licensure requires an inspection by the local health department and written certification that the kennel facility is in full compliance with all applicable statutes, regulations, and ordinances (including zoning and building code ordinances). In most cases residential zoning requirements would prohibit operation of kennel businesses without a zoning variance. In addition, residential homes would require significant renovation in order to meet the requirements for kennels.

People who care for animals in the dog owner’s home (i.e., pet sitters) and people who walk dogs for their owners (i.e., dog walkers) would not need a kennel license in order to provide care for these animals.

Unlicensed boarding kennels operated in residences have been problematic. In 2014, an unlicensed home-based boarding kennel in northern New Jersey caught fire killing 11 dogs and 3 cats. While all licensed kennels must be inspected annually by the municipal fire officials, unlicensed home-based kennels are not inspected by fire officials.