



Tethering Language That Became Law on July 1, 2020

New language in italics and bold From Code Section 3.2-6500

“Adequate shelter” means provision of and access to shelter that is suitable for the species, age, condition, size, and type of each animal; provides adequate space for each animal; is safe and protects each animal from injury, rain, sleet, snow, hail, direct sunlight, the adverse effects of heat or cold, physical suffering, and impairment of health; is properly lighted; is properly cleaned; enables each animal to be clean and dry, except when detrimental to the species; during hot weather, is properly shaded and does not readily conduct heat; during cold weather, has a windbreak at its entrance and provides a quantity of bedding material consisting of **straw hay**, cedar shavings, or the equivalent that is sufficient to protect the animal from cold and promote the retention of body heat; and, for dogs and cats, provides a solid surface, resting platform, pad, floormat, or similar device that is large enough for the animal to lie on in a normal manner and can be maintained in a sanitary manner. Under this chapter, shelters whose wire, grid, or slat floors (i) permit the animals’ feet to pass through the openings, (ii) sag under the animals’ weight, or (iii) otherwise do not protect the animals’ feet or toes from injury are not adequate shelter.

*The outdoor tethering of an animal shall not constitute the provision of adequate shelter (a) unless the animal is safe from predators and well suited and well equipped to tolerate its environment; (b) during the effective period for a hurricane warning or tropical storm warning issued for the area by the National Weather Service; or (c) (1) during a heat advisory issued by a local or state authority, (2) when the actual or effective outdoor temperature is 85 degrees Fahrenheit or higher or 32 degrees Fahrenheit or lower, or (3) during the effective period for a severe weather warning issued for the area by the National Weather Service, including a winter storm, tornado, or severe thunderstorm warning, unless an animal control officer, having inspected an animal’s individual circumstances in clause (c) (1), (2), or (3), has determined the animal to be safe from predators and well suited and well equipped to tolerate its environment.**

“Adequate space” means sufficient space to allow each animal to (i) easily stand, sit, lie, turn about, and make all other normal body movements in a comfortable, normal position for the animal and (ii) interact safely with other animals in the enclosure. When an animal is tethered, “adequate space”

means that the tether to which the animal is attached permits the above actions and is appropriate to the age and size of the animal; is attached to the animal by a properly applied collar, halter, or harness that is configured so as to protect the animal from injury and prevent the animal or tether from becoming entangled with other objects or animals, or from extending over an object or edge that could result in the strangulation or injury of the animal; is at least **ten 15** feet in length or **three four** times the length of the animal, as measured from the tip of its nose to the base of its tail, whichever is greater, except when the animal is being walked on a leash or is attached by a tether to a lead line *or when an animal control officer, having inspected an animal’s individual circumstances, has determined that in such an individual case, a tether of at least 10 feet or three times the length of the animal, but shorter than 15 feet or four times the length of the animal, makes the animal more safe, more suited, and better equipped to tolerate its environment than a longer tether;* does not, by its material, size, or weight or any other characteristic, cause injury or pain to the animal; does not weigh more than one-tenth of the animal’s body weight; and does not have weights or other heavy objects attached to it. The walking of an animal on a leash by its owner shall not constitute the tethering of the animal for the purpose of this definition. When freedom of movement would endanger the animal, temporarily and appropriately restricting movement of the animal according to professionally accepted standards for the species is considered provision of adequate space. The provisions of this definition that relate to tethering shall not apply to agricultural animals.

*Discretion is included to expand protections that the ACO feels would better serve the dog here: *“unless an animal control officer, having inspected an animal’s individual circumstances in clause (c) (1), (2), or (3), has determined the animal to be safe from predators and well suited and well equipped to tolerate its environment.”*

This is to call your attention to language that was added to the Code during the 2019 Legislative Session that is important during hot and cold weather. This language was added to the definition of Adequate Shelter: “during hot weather, is properly shaded and does not readily conduct heat; during cold weather, has a windbreak at its entrance and provides a quantity of bedding material consisting of straw, cedar shavings, or the equivalent that is sufficient to protect the animal from cold and promote the retention of body heat;”