# Frequently asked questions – pig and poultry farms

**What are the current planning requirements for pig and poultry farms?**

All pig and poultry farms currently require a planning permit in the Farming Zone, Rural Activity Zone and Green Wedge Zone.

All pig and poultry farms meet the definition of ‘intensive animal husbandry’ in the Victoria Planning Provisions as pigs and poultry require ‘most’ of their food to be imported from outside their enclosures. ‘Intensive animal husbandry’ is currently a section 2 (permit required) use in the Farming Zone, Rural Activity Zone and Green Wedge Zone.

**What changes are proposed for pig and poultry farms?**

The proposed reforms introduce permit exemptions or a streamlined permit application process for small-scale pig and poultry farms that meet certain conditions.

The proposed reforms also enable pig and poultry farms to establish with a planning permit in certain zones where they are currently prohibited (Green Wedge A Zone, Rural Conservation Zone, and Rural Living Zone).

**Why is a planning permit required?**

The planning permit process is necessary because even small, free range pig farms can have significant environmental and amenity impacts if not sited and managed correctly. The planning permit application process allows local government to consider whether the siting and size of a proposed farm, or an expansion of an existing farm, is compatible with the specific location. The process allows potential environmental and amenity risks to be identified and mitigated through the siting, design and operation of the farm. It also provides proponents the opportunity to consider with council the ability of the land to accommodate future expansion.

**Will the planning permit process be the same for all pig farms?**

All pig farms currently require a planning permit. The proposed reforms introduce permit exemptions or a streamlined application process for farms that meet certain conditions. All other pig farms continue to require a land use planning permit.

While a land use planning permit is required for a broad range of pig farm scales, the assessment of permit applications occurs in accordance with the risks associated with proposals.

The proposed reforms are the first step in developing a graduated approach to planning controls based on risk. Opportunities to further simplify planning regulation for other scales of farming will be explored as part of the development of the general code of practice for animal industries and industry-specific technical guidelines.

**Will the Broiler Code apply to free-range poultry farms?**

The *Victorian Code for Broiler Farms (2009)* was developed to ensure high environmental standards of large-scale broiler farms. Currently, the Codeonly applies to conventional broiler farms with chickens that are housed permanently in sheds. The reforms include a proposal to amend the Code so it also applies to free range broiler farms. This is because the environmental and amenity impacts of both types of farms at the large-scale are comparable. This change will provide greater certainty and a clearer and more consistent assessment framework for free range broiler farm applications.

Consideration is being given to whether the Broiler code should apply to small scale free range chicken meat farms.

**Why are there permit exemptions for conventional broiler farms to open a new range for up to 150,000 chickens without a planning permit?**

The Victoria Planning Provisions currently allows an existing, lawfully established conventional broiler farm to convert to a free-range system, provided a number of conditions are met: the number of chickens must not be increased, and there must be no more than 150,000 chickens.

This permit exemption recognises that:

* most existing broiler farms have established in accordance with a planning permit where the siting of the broiler sheds has been considered, and
* there are no significant new amenity and environmental impacts introduced due to the conversion of a conventional to a free range system.

**Why can cattle feedlots with up to 1,000 cattle be established with no planning permit?**

This is the existing arrangement in the Farming Zone and Rural Activity Zone as set out in the *Victorian Code for Cattle Feedlots*. No change is proposed to the way cattle feedlots are regulated in these zones.

While a permit is not required to use land for a cattle feedlot with up to 1,000 cattle in these zones, the use must still comply with the requirements of the *Victorian Code for Cattle Feedlots (1995)* to the satisfaction of the responsible authority (the council) and meet other conditions specified in the zones.

The requirements for feedlots with less than 50 head of cattle include the following mandatory setbacks:

* 300m from a neighbouring dwelling
* 200m from a waterway
* 800m from a potable water supply.

Setbacks for feedlots with more than 50 head of cattle are also required but are calculated on a case by case basis using a range of factors including stocking density, distance to sensitive receptors, receptor type, terrain and vegetation cover.

For both types of feedlots, a proposal demonstrating compliance with the Code, and environment and waste management plans, must be submitted to the council before the use can commence.