



University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture

An Agricultural Law Research Project

## **States' Right-To-Farm Statutes**

**State of Washington**

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## States' Right-to-Farm Statutes

### STATE OF WASHINGTON

Wash. Rev. Code §§ 7.48.300 to 7.48.320

*Current with all laws from the 2016 Regular and First Special Sessions of the Washington legislature that take effect on or before July 1, 2016*

#### **7.48.300. Agricultural activities and forest practices--Legislative finding and purpose**

The legislature finds that agricultural activities conducted on farmland and forest practices in urbanizing areas are often subjected to nuisance lawsuits, and that such suits encourage and even force the premature removal of the lands from agricultural uses and timber production. It is therefore the purpose of RCW 7.48.300 through 7.48.310 and 7.48.905 to provide that agricultural activities conducted on farmland and forest practices be protected from nuisance lawsuits.

#### **7.48.305. Agricultural activities and forest practices--Presumed reasonable and not a nuisance--Exception--Damages**

(1) Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, agricultural activities conducted on farmland and forest practices, if consistent with good agricultural and forest practices and established prior to surrounding nonagricultural and nonforestry activities, are presumed to be reasonable and shall not be found to constitute a nuisance unless the activity or practice has a substantial adverse effect on public health and safety.

(2) Agricultural activities and forest practices undertaken in conformity with all applicable laws and rules are presumed to be good agricultural and forest practices not adversely affecting the public health and safety for purposes of this section and RCW 7.48.300. An agricultural activity that is in conformity with such laws and rules shall not be restricted as to the hours of the day or day or days of the week during which it may be conducted.

(3) The act of owning land upon which a growing crop of trees is located, even if the tree growth is being managed passively and even if the owner does not indicate the land's status as a working forest, is considered to be a forest practice occurring on the land if the crop of trees is located on land that is capable of supporting a merchantable stand of timber that is not being actively used for a use that is incompatible with timber growing. If the growing of trees has been established prior to surrounding nonforestry activities, then the act of tree growth is considered a necessary part of any other subsequent stages of forest practices necessary to bring a crop of trees from its planting to final harvest and is included in the provisions of this section.

(4) Nothing in this section shall affect or impair any right to sue for damages.

#### **7.48.310. Agricultural activities and forest practices--Definitions**

For the purposes of RCW 7.48.305 only:

(1) "Agricultural activity" means a condition or activity which occurs on a farm in connection with the commercial production of farm products and includes, but is not limited to, marketed produce at roadside stands or farm markets; noise; odors; dust; fumes; operation of machinery and irrigation pumps; movement, including, but not limited to, use of current county road ditches, streams, rivers, canals, and drains, and use of water for agricultural activities; ground and aerial application of seed, fertilizers, conditioners, and plant protection products; keeping of bees for production of agricultural or apicultural products; employment and use of labor; roadway movement of equipment and livestock; protection from damage by wildlife; prevention of trespass; construction and maintenance of buildings, fences, roads, bridges, ponds, drains, waterways, and similar features and maintenance of stream banks and watercourses; and conversion from one agricultural activity to another, including a change in the type of plant-related farm product being produced. The term includes use of new practices and equipment consistent with technological development within the agricultural industry.

(2) "Farm" means the land, buildings, freshwater ponds, freshwater culturing and growing facilities, and machinery used in the commercial production of farm products.

(3) "Farmland" means land or freshwater ponds devoted primarily to the production, for commercial purposes, of livestock, freshwater aquacultural, or other farm products.

(4) "Farm product" means those plants and animals useful to humans and includes, but is not limited to, forages and sod crops, dairy and dairy products, poultry and poultry products, livestock, including breeding, grazing, and recreational equine use, fruits, vegetables, flowers, seeds, grasses, trees, freshwater fish and fish products, apiaries and apiary products, equine and other similar products, or any other product which incorporates the use of food, feed, fiber, or fur.

(5) "Forest practice" means any activity conducted on or directly pertaining to forest land, as that term is defined in RCW 76.09.020, and relating to growing, harvesting, or processing timber. The term "forest practices" includes, but is not limited to, road and trail construction, final and intermediate harvesting, precommercial thinning, reforestation, fertilization, prevention and suppression of diseases and insects, salvage of trees, brush control, and owning land where trees may passively grow until one of the preceding activities is deemed timely

by the owner.

**7.48.315. Agricultural activities and forest practices--Recovering lawsuit costs--Farmers**

(1) A farmer who prevails in any action, claim, or counterclaim alleging that agricultural activity on a farm constitutes a nuisance may recover the full costs and expenses determined by a court to have been reasonably incurred by the farmer as a result of the action, claim, or counterclaim.

(2) A farmer who prevails in any action, claim, or counterclaim (a) based on an allegation that agricultural activity on a farm is in violation of specified laws, rules, or ordinances, (b) where such activity is not found to be in violation of the specified laws, rules, or ordinances, and (c) actual damages are realized by the farm as a result of the action, claim, or counterclaim, may recover the full costs and expenses determined by a court to have been reasonably incurred by the farmer as a result of the action, claim, or counterclaim.

(3) The costs and expenses that may be recovered according to subsection (1) or (2) of this section include actual damages and reasonable attorneys' fees and costs. For the purposes of this subsection, "actual damages" include lost revenue and the replacement value of crops or livestock damaged or unable to be harvested or sold as a result of the action, claim, or counterclaim.

(4) In addition to any sums recovered according to subsection (1) or (2) of this section, a farmer may recover exemplary damages if a court finds that the action, claim, or counterclaim was initiated maliciously and without probable cause.

(5) A farmer may not recover the costs and expenses authorized in this section from a state or local agency that investigates or pursues an enforcement action pursuant to an allegation as specified in subsection (2) of this section.

**7.48.320. Agricultural activities and forest practices--Recovering costs to investigate complaints--State and local agencies**

A state or local agency required to investigate a complaint alleging agricultural activity on a farm is in violation of specified laws, rules, or ordinances and where such activity is not found to be in violation of such specified laws, rules, or ordinances may recover its full investigative costs and expenses if a court determines that the complaint was initiated maliciously and without probable cause.