



# **Town of Reading Massachusetts**

**Public Safety  
Public Health**

## **Health Regulations**

**Section 26 – Feeding of Wildlife**

## SECTION 26 FEEDING OF WILDLIFE

### 26.1 Purpose

This regulation is intended for the safety of the public's health and prevention of injury from wildlife, by establishing a requirement that wildlife is not to be fed, at any point in time, in the Town of Reading. This regulation is promulgated pursuant to the authority granted to the Reading Board of Health by Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 111, Section 31 which states "Boards of Health may make reasonable health regulations".

### 26.2 Definitions

- Attractant:* means any substance including food (human and pet), bird seed, livestock feed, grain, shelled, shucked, or un-shucked corn, seed, wheat, bakery products, meat, minerals, fish, honey, molasses, compost, other nutritive substances, scents, waste products or refuse, that attract Wildlife intentionally or unintentionally.
- Enforcement Authority:* means Animal Control, Police Officers, agents of the Board of Health, Environmental Police Officers, and other enforcement officers of the Division of Law Enforcement, and by the Deputy Environmental Police Officers.
- Feeding:* means the act, intentionally or unintentionally, of placing, exposing, depositing, distributing, or scattering, directly or indirectly, an Attractant, in a manner to attract Wildlife.
- Wildlife:* means any undomesticated and unrestrained animal or fowl, including, but not limited to, coyotes, foxes, raccoons, skunks, turkeys, and bears.

### 26.3 Prohibited Activity with Wildlife

- a No person shall intentionally or unintentionally feed, use, place, provide, give, expose, deposit, scatter, distribute, or store in manner accessible to Wildlife, any Attractant that provides a lure or enticement to Wildlife on any property.
- b The Enforcement Authority may notify, in writing, owners and occupants of properties where Wildlife Feeding has occurred. If known, the notification will be directed to the responsible party, as well as the owner and occupant of the property.
- c Failure to remove or contain the Attractant, in such a manner as to make it inaccessible to Wildlife, within two (2) days of notice of the violation by the Board of Health or its designee, may be evidence that the Wildlife feeding was done intentionally.

### 26.4 Exceptions

The following are exempt from these regulations:

- a Any individual, company, or corporation that is licensed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts or entitled under law to feed or possess Wildlife of any kind, including but not limited to, the feeding of waterfowl under G.L. c. 131, § 23; provided, however, if this possession of the Attractant is determined to be causing a public safety threat, by lack of containment, the Attractant is to be removed or contained within 48 hours.
- b Any action that is officially sanctioned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that would require feeding, baiting, or luring of Wildlife for management purposes, including hunting, scientific projects, or research.
- c Attractants deposited by natural vegetation.
- d Any individual, company, or corporation that is engaged in lawful agricultural pursuits, including but not limited to growing crops, crop-bearing plants, or raising livestock.
- e The use of a bird feeder; provided, however, if a bird feeder is determined to be the cause of a public safety threat or nuisance, the bird feeder and seed debris shall be removed within 48 hours.
- f The feeding of pets, provided that if food intended for pets is determined to be the source of Wildlife Feeding, the landowner or person responsible for the premises will be required to take steps to render such pet food inaccessible to Wildlife, including the requirement that the pet food be removed. If any wildlife gains access to pet food, the conditions allowing access must be corrected or the pet food removed within 48 hours.

- g** Emergency feeding of waterfowl and other birds when, in the opinion of the Director of the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife or their agent or designee, such action is necessary to alleviate undue losses and suffering of such birds due to unusual weather conditions and other circumstances.

## **26.5 Violations / Enforcement**

- a** It shall be the responsibility of the landowner or person Feeding Wildlife, to ensure compliance with all sections of this regulation.
- b** The Board of Health and the Health Division Agents may, in lieu of or in addition to any other remedy available pursuant to applicable law or regulation, assess fines for violations of this regulation pursuant to Town Bylaw Article 1 Section 1.8 and M.G.L. c. 40, § 21D referenced therein, as follows: a fine of \$50 First Offense, \$100 Second Offense, and \$150 for each Additional Offenses. Each day that the offense continues shall constitute a separate offense.
- c** Enforcement of this regulation shall be by the Reading Board of Health or its designated agent(s). The Board of Health may enforce these regulations or enjoin violations thereof through any lawful process, and the election of one remedy by the Board of Health shall not preclude enforcement through any other lawful means.

## **26.6 Severability**

Each provision of these regulations shall be construed as separate, to the end, that if any part of it shall be held invalid for any reason, the remainder shall continue in full force and effect.

## **26.7 Effective**

Effective date: 8/14/2025