



# Frequently Asked Questions

## Temporary Farm Worker Housing

### **Q: What is Temporary Farm Worker Housing?**

A: Temporary farm worker housing (TFWH) is the use of a building or buildings on a farm for the accommodation of seasonal and/or foreign workers employed on a temporary basis. The Zoning Bylaw allows temporary farm worker housing where it is needed to support specific agriculture uses occurring on the lot (see [Zoning Bylaw section 210.7.5\(h\)](#)).

### **Q: What is a temporary farm worker?**

A: Temporary farm workers carry out agricultural work on a temporary or seasonal basis for a minimum of 35 hours per week. Worker stays are generally limited to a maximum of 10 months in a calendar year, with further flexibility for federal labour program migrant workers (see [Zoning Bylaw section 210.7.5\(h\)](#)).

### **Q: Which properties are permitted Temporary Farm Worker Housing?**

A: Subject to specific requirements and ALC approval, TFWH is permitted for certain farm types on A Zoned (A1-A6) lots that are 3.8 ha or larger, located in the ALR, and classified as a farm under the *BC Assessment Act*.

### **Q: Can I build TFWH on a property that I lease?**

A: No. TFWH is only permitted on a lot owned by the farmer, farm operation, or corporation employing the workers.

### **Q: Can I build TFWH on a vacant lot?**

A: TFWH can only be placed on a lot with an existing single detached dwelling or where the TFWH is proposed in more than one building.

### **Q: My property is located in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). Do I need approval from the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC)?**

A: Yes. Approval of an [ALC Non-Adhering Residential Use application](#) is required before placing or converting any building for this use. All proposals will be reviewed and evaluated by the City's Agriculture Advisory Committee (AAC) and Council. If Council supports the proposal, ALC approval will also be required.

### **Q: How many farm workers can I accommodate on my farm?**

A: The Zoning Bylaw allows accommodation of up to 60 workers per farm operation, if approved by the ALC. Requests for more than 60 workers are evaluated case-by-case through the rezoning application process.

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**Planning Services**  
604-864-5510  
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## Q: How large can my Temporary Farm Worker Housing be?

A: The allowable building size directly relates to the number of required workers. A maximum of 15 m<sup>2</sup> is permitted per accommodated worker. Therefore, if your farm is approved (ALC) for 40 workers then your TFWH building(s) can have a total floor area up to 600 m<sup>2</sup> in size (40 workers x 15 m<sup>2</sup> = 600 m<sup>2</sup>).

However, the amount of worker housing that can be located on an individual property is tied to the size of the lot, as outlined below:

- up to 300 m<sup>2</sup> on a property that is less than 8 ha
- up to 600 m<sup>2</sup> on a property that is bigger than 8 ha and less than 16 ha
- up to 900 m<sup>2</sup> on a property that is bigger than 16 ha

**Note:** Farms with greenhouses are not subject to the lot/size thresholds listed above. Instead, the amount of potential housing relates to the size of the greenhouse buildings on the lot and ALC approval. See Zoning Bylaw section [210.7.5\(e\)\(i\)](#) for specific details.

## Q: Are there rules about the type of building that can be used for TFWH?

A: Yes. New TFWH is only permitted in removable pre-fabricated buildings or in an existing building converted for such use. Only one permanent building can be converted per lot, and the worker housing in that building may not exceed 300 m<sup>2</sup>.

If a converted building includes any other uses, the housing must be designed to be completely independent and separate from the rest of the building.

## Q: Can I accommodate temporary farm workers in my main house?

A: The Zoning Bylaw allows a single detached dwelling on an A zoned lot to be used as a 'Boarding House' for up to 12 temporary farm workers if the workers are registered in a federal migrant worker program, and subject to other conditions, such as minimum lot size, farm status, and obtaining a business licence. Alternatively, basic 'Boarding' allows for up to 4 people to live with the primary occupants of the dwelling. See Zoning Bylaw sections [140.3.2](#) and [140.3.3](#) for detailed requirements. In addition, farm workers can be housed in a secondary suite and/or an accessory farm dwelling unit.

**Note:** The BC Building Code includes additional requirements where a residential building accommodates more than 10 people. Applicants seeking to accommodate more than 10 people in their single detached dwelling should contact the building department (604-864-5525) for more information.

## Q: I have an approved Accessory Farm Dwelling Unit on my lot. Can I use it for temporary farm workers?

A: Yes. See Question #15 of the ALC's [Residential Flexibility in the ALR Frequently Asked Questions](#).

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## Helpful Links:

[City of Abbotsford Zoning Bylaw](#)

[ALC Development Application Form](#)

[ALC Act and ALR Regulations](#)

[ALC Policy L-26 Non-Adhering Residential Use Applications](#)

[ALC Information Bulletin 07 - Soil or Fill Uses in the ALR](#)

[Business Licences \(Boarding House\)](#)

## Notes:

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