Roosters lead the pecking order of illegal pets in NYC

New York City is home to more than a million pets, according to various estimates. The vast majority of these pets are either dogs or cats. While the exact population of pets in the Big Apple is up for debate, the New York City Economic Development or NYCEDC estimate of 1.1 million is widely referenced.

Besides canines and felines, some New Yorkers seem to have an affinity towards animals that are outrightly outlawed to be kept as pets. Apart from issuing licenses to dog owners, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene or DOHMH has a list of animals that are forbidden to be kept as pets.

For starters, most farm animals cannot be kept as pets. The list of outlawed animals includes wild animals like lions, kangaroos, ferrets, bees, and many others. The department's reasons for listing some of these animals may seem obvious while others may not.

The city's 311 complaints system, a service established for New Yorkers to file complaints about anything to city authorities, allows people to report illegal animals being kept as pets. Alternatively, people who own these animals can drop them off at Animal Care Centers locations across the city to avoid a violation.

An analysis of 311 complaints offers an insight into which of these animals are mostly reported to city officials. The 311 data since 2010 identifies animals such as roosters, snakes, ferrets, monkeys, and turtles among some of the oft-reported complaints.

Roosters

Roosters lead the pecking order of complaints of illegal animals kept as pets. The noisy cluckers had nearly 1,800, more than 50 percent of the city's total complaints of unlawful pets.

These complaints came from all over the city's five boroughs. The majority of the complaints, 585, came from Queens, with Manhattan, 104, having the lowest complaints.

Why are they illegal:

There are several reasons why roosters are illegal. The obvious reason is the nuisance they create with their crowing. Rooster fighting is another reason why these animals are not permitted.

[Cockfighting](https://www.aspca.org/improving-laws-animals/public-policy/cockfighting#:~:text=Cockfighting%20is%20a%20blood%20sport,among%20all%20sorts%20of%20people.) is a blood sport in which two roosters specifically bred for aggression are placed beak to beak in a small ring and encouraged to fight to the death.

Snakes:

Snakes are a popular choice among exotic pet lovers. There were about 260 complaints made about these slimy sneaky creatures.

Brooklyn had the most complaints, 89, about snakes, while Staten Island got the least amount with 27.

Why are they illegal?

City authorities forbid the keeping of these venomous reptiles as pets. Large constrictor snakes are also illegal.

For most [landlords](https://nypost.com/2013/08/31/nyers-claim-snakes-make-great-pets-despite-the-danger/), their outrage toward snakes is more than pet peeves. That notwithstanding, certain types of snakes, primarily non-venomous, could be kept as pets. Your best would be to check which of the [list](https://crasstalk.com/2013/03/these-animals-are-illegal-to-keep-as-pets-in-new-york-city/) of illegal animals.

Ferrets

A [ferret](https://www.livescience.com/54391-ferrets.html) is a small, furry creature with a cone-shaped nose, a long tail, and a long, pear-shaped body with short legs and long claws.

There were 74 complaints about ferrets throughout the city. Queens had 21 complaints, the most by any borough, while Staten Island had nine complaints.

Why are they illegal?

New York City has long considered ferrets as wild animals and generally banned them.

In 1999, former New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani made it illegal for ferrets to be kept as pets due to fear of rabies. There were also concerns that the furry creatures could attack children.

Monkeys

Across the state, 36 complaints were filed against people keeping monkeys as pets. Brooklyn and Queens accounted for nearly 60 percent of all these complaints, while the other boroughs made up for the rest.

Why are they illegal?

Only licensed authorities like zoos or animal researchers can keep the primate, as they're considered illegal as pets.

These primates are typically regarded as unpredictable no matter how domesticated they appear. There have been reports of some turning on their owners, which justifies the city's stance.

Iguanas

Half of the 34 complaints about iguanas came from Brooklyn. The rest of the complaints were pretty evenly distributed across the borough.

Why are they illegal?

Iguanas, which belong to the reptile family, are venomous, although their venom may not typically be as [deadly](https://www.nytimes.com/1995/09/03/nyregion/heres-the-iguana-the-pet-of-the-90s.html) as other siblings.

The decision to ban these reptiles dates far back to the 90s when the Department of Health moved to ban hundreds of species of animals, including iguanas, from ownership.

Turtle

A total of 13 complaints were received about turtles under 4 inches long. Nine of these complaints came from Brooklyn, with the rest coming from all the other boroughs except Manhattan.

Why are they

It's illegal to sell or distribute pet turtles with shells less than 4 inches long because they spread salmonella.

Forty years ago, the U.S. outlawed the sale of tiny turtles as pets because they harbor salmonella, a bacterium that causes a highly unpleasant and occasionally deadly illness in humans.

Caveat:

The 311 data showed that 513 complaints were made about Farm Animals but offered no breakdown. Another set of complaints classified as "Other" had 847 total complaints; again, no breakdown was provided.

Also, these complaints have not been filtered to remove instances of duplication of complaints about the same incidents.