# Guide to Agricultural Worker Housing

COUNTY of VENTURA

## Introduction

Agriculture is an integral part of Ventura County's economy, geography, and society. For this reason, protecting agricultural lands and resources and supporting the agricultural workforce is a top priority. An important way the County of Ventura supports local agriculture is by including several housing opportunities for all types of agricultural workers—full time, part-time, temporary, seasonal; as well as single farmworkers, and those with families.

Agricultural workers face unique housing challenges and have specific housing needs with regards to location, affordability, and housing type. To help meet these needs and improve the lives of agricultural workers, the County of Ventura has made it easier to develop a variety of agricultural worker housing by updating development standards and permitting processes for this type of housing.

## How to use this Guide

This Guide summarizes the four types of agricultural worker housing allowed in unincorporated Ventura County and the standards that apply to each of them. While it is a helpful tool to understand agricultural worker housing, you should always consult ***Sec. 8107-41*** of the **Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance (NCZO)** for more detailed information.

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# Overview of Agricultural Worker Housing

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## Key Terms *(NCZO Sec. 8102-0)*

- Agriculture: Farming, including animal husbandry and the production and management of crops (including aquatic crops) for food, fiber, fuel and ornament.
- Animal keeping: The keeping of animals other than for husbandry or pet purposes, with or without compensation; including such activities as boarding, stabling, pasturing, rehabilitating, training of animals and lessons for their owners, and recreational riding by the owners of the animals; but excluding such activities as the rental use of the animals by people other than the owners, and excluding events such as organized competitions, judgings and the like.
- Farmworker: A person principally employed in agriculture.
- Animal Caretaker: A person employed full time on the same property for activities associated with Animal Husbandry or Animal Keeping, Non-Husbandry
- Principally Employed (Farmworker): Income from activities associated with agriculture is at least 50 percent of gross personal income, as reflected in documents cited in ***Section 8107-41.2.2(f)***. For temporary or seasonal farmworkers, gross personal income may be calculated on a quarterly basis to meet the employment criteria.
- Employed full-time: The person is working a minimum of 32 hours per week at the job for which they are employed.

## What is Agricultural Worker Housing?

Agricultural worker housing is housing occupied by farmworkers and animal caretakers in the form of farmworker or animal caretaker dwelling units, farmworker housing complexes, group quarters or temporary trailers pursuant to ***NCZO Section 8107-41***.

Each of the four above types of agricultural worker housing is unique, and has its own set of standards. Each housing type is defined and explained in detail on the following pages.

For a quick comparison of each type of agricultural worker housing, please refer to the table below.

**IMPORTANT!**

All agricultural worker housing must be permitted by the Ventura County Planning Division. However, some agricultural worker housing is considered to be agricultural employee housing and must *also* be permitted by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD).

To find out if your project requires a permit from HCD, see ***NCZO Section 8107-26.3.***

**Occupancy and Employment Criteria for Agricultural Worker Housing**

| Type of Agricultural Worker Housing | Can be occupied by: | | | Employment criteria: | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Farmworker | Animal Caretaker | Members of worker's household | Worker must be employed full-time | Worker must be principally employed | Annual verification of employment required |
| Farmworker and Animal Caretaker Dwelling Units | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Farmworker Housing Complexes | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Farmworker Group Quarters | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Farmworker and Animal Caretaker Temporary Trailers | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |

# Farmworker/Animal Caretaker Dwelling Units

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## What are they?

Farmworker/Animal Caretaker Dwelling Units are dwelling units occupied by one or more farmworkers or animal caretakers, who are employed full-time and working on-site where the dwelling unit is located, or employed on other land that is under the same ownership or lease as the subject lot. Members of the farmworker's or animal caretaker's household may also occupy said dwelling unit. *(defined in **NCZO Sec. 8102-0**).* They often take the form of small homes or cottages like those pictured below.

*Note: Farmworkers who are principally employed offsite in agricultural activities (e.g., in agricultural packing and storage facilities, and transportation of agricultural products to the market) may NOT occupy a farmworker dwelling unit.*

## What types of permits are needed?

If the Farmworker/Animal Caretaker Dwelling Unit meets all applicable standards in ***NCZO Sec. 8107-41.3.2***, and the total number of units do not exceed the limit in ***NCZO Table 8107-41.1***, a maximum of four (4) units may be approved with a ministerial **Zoning Clearance** from the Planning Division.

If the unit does not meet these standards, it may still be approved with a discretionary **Planned Development Permit** approved by the Planning Director.

In either case, a **Building Permit** from the Building and Safety Division is also required after receiving the Planning entitlement.

| Standards for Farmworker/Animal Caretaker Dwelling Units (See *NCZO Sec. 8107-41.3.2*) | |
|---|---|
| **Allowable Zoning** *(NCZO Sec. 8105-4)* | • Agricultural Exclusive (AE)<br>• Open Space (OS)<br>• Rural Agricultural (RA)<br>• Timberland Preserve (TP) |
| **Location** | • May NOT be placed on farmland designated Prime or Statewide Importance (unless no alternative location on the lot)<br>• May NOT be on land actively used for crop cultivation<br>• MUST be located near existing roads and structures<br>• MUST be on the same lot where the residents are employed or on a lot under the same ownership/lease |
| **Size** | • Maximum 4 units of 1,800 sq. ft. each allowed on each lot with a Zoning Clearance<br>• If the unit is attached to another accessory structure with internal access to the unit, the square footage of that accessory structure counts toward the 1,800 sq. ft maximum |
| **Height** | Must meet requirements of the zone it is in (See ***NCZO Sec. 8106***) |
| **Lot Coverage** | |
| **Setbacks** | |
| **Parking** *(NCZO Sec. 8108-4.7)* | • At least 1 space per unit<br>• 2 spaces for 2-4 bedroom units |
| **Occupancy Criteria** *(NCZO Sec. 8107-41.2)* | • Can ONLY be occupied by full-time farmworkers or animal caretakers (with their household) working on-site where unit is located, or employed on other land in Ventura County under same ownership or lease. *(The full-time requirement of 32 hours per week must be met for at least 9 months of the calendar year)*<br>• Workers who become disabled or retire, may continue to occupy the unit with their household. After death of the worker, their surviving spouse or domestic partner may continue to reside.<br>• Deed restriction for unit MUST be recorded with County Recorder |
| **Other** | • Exterior lighting used must be low profile, directed downward, fully-shielded, and for security only<br>• Annual verification of employment is required *(**Sec. 8107-41.2.3**)* |

# Standardized Building Plans for Farmworker / Animal Caretaker Dwelling Units

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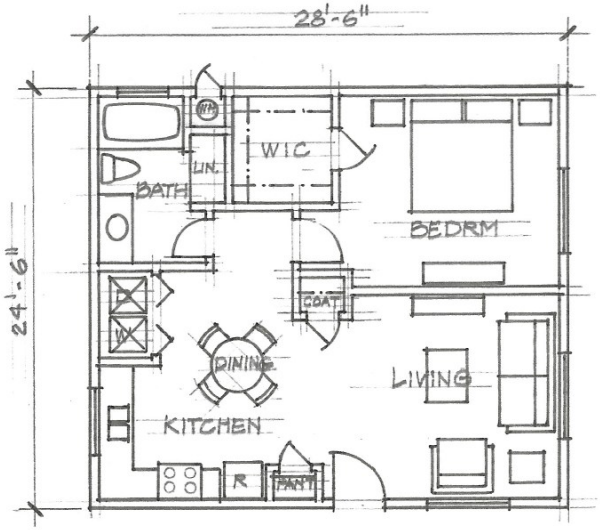
## Consider using our Standardized Plans!

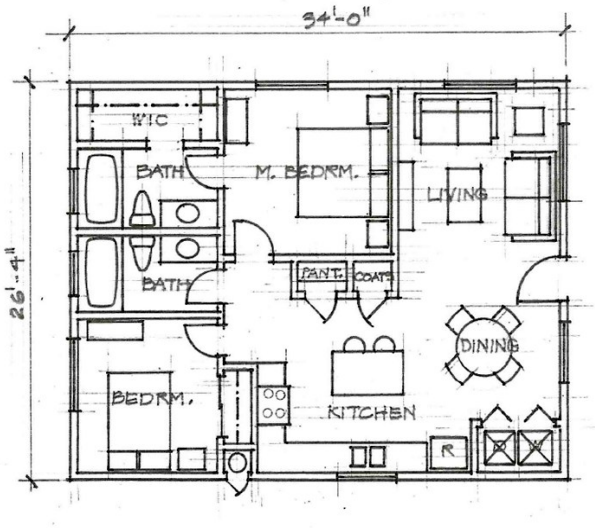
The County has 1, 2, and 3-bedroom construction plans that have already been reviewed and pre-approved by the Building and Safety Division. These plans can be used for detached Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) or Farmworker/Animal Caretaker Dwelling Units. Using these plans saves time and money during the permitting process, and you can still personalize the look of your unit! The illustrative renderings and basic floorplans are pictured below.

For more information, visit vcrma.org/divisions/planning/standardized-plans-for-accessory-dwelling-units-and-farmworker-animal-caretaker-dwelling-units/

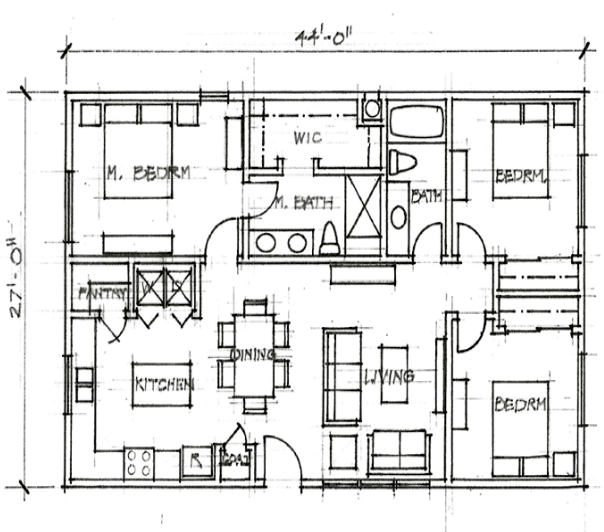
### 1-Bedroom | 700 square feet




### 2-Bedroom | 900 square feet




### 3-Bedroom | 1,188 square feet



# Farmworker Housing Complexes

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## What are they?

A **Farmworker Housing Complex** is a residential development, distinct from a farmworker dwelling unit, where the units are rented to persons who are principally employed within Ventura County for activities associated with agriculture. Farmworker housing complexes may include studios, one, two, or three-bedroom units within the complex. Members of the farmworker's household may also occupy said unit within the complex. *(defined in **NCZO Sec. 8102-0**).*

They often take the form of apartment complexes or townhomes like those pictured below.

*Image: Valle Naranjal, a 66-unit farmworker housing complex in Piru*

## What types of permits are needed?

Farmworker Housing Complexes that meet all applicable standards may be approved with a discretionary **Planned Development Permit** approved by the Planning Commission; and a **Building Permit** from the Building and Safety Division.

| Standards for Farmworker Housing Complexes *(NCZO Sec. 8107-41.3.3)* | |
|---|---|
| **Allowable Zoning** *(**NCZO Sec. 8105-4**)* | • Agricultural Exclusive (AE)<br>• Open Space (OS)<br>• Rural Agricultural (RA) |
| **Location** | • May NOT be placed on farmland designated Prime or Statewide Importance (unless no alternative location on the lot)<br>• May NOT be on land actively used for crop cultivation<br>• May NOT be in High or Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones<br>• MUST be located near existing roads and structures |
| **Minimum Parcel Size** | • 40 acres in AE zone (except if they meet ***NCZO Sec. 8103-2.7***)<br>• 10 acres in OS zone<br>• 5 acres in RA zone |
| **Height** | Must meet requirements of the zone it is in (See ***NCZO Section 8106***) |
| **Setbacks** | |
| **Lot Coverage** | |
| **Parking** | Multifamily dwelling unit parking standards apply, see ***NCZO Sec. 8107-4.7.1*** for details. |
| **Occupancy Criteria** *(**NCZO Sec. 8107-41.2**)* | • Can ONLY be occupied by principally employed farmworkers within Ventura County for agricultural activities *(includes full-time, full-time seasonal, temporary or part-time farmworkers)*<br>• Farmworkers who become disabled or retire, may continue to occupy the unit with their household. After death of the farmworker, their surviving spouse or domestic partner may continue to reside.<br>• Deed restriction for units MUST be recorded with County Recorder |
| **Other** | • Exterior lighting used must be low profile, directed downward, fully-shielded, and for security only<br>• If complex has more than 12 units, landscaping, recreational space, and open space must be provided (***Sec. 8107-41.3.3(d)***)<br>• Annual verification of employment is required *(**Sec. 8107-41.2.3**)* |

# Farmworker Group Quarters

## What are they? Who can live in them?

Farmworker Group Quarters are a group of structures, or a single structure in the form of single room occupancy, dormitories, boarding houses, barracks or bunkhouses, consisting of either individual or shared facilities for the purpose of providing housing or services for farmworkers. These facilities are generally designed as a combination of sleeping rooms or bunk beds and may include a shared kitchen, mess hall and bathroom facility. This type of agricultural worker housing is designed for, and may only be occupied by, individual farmworkers and not their families; and may, but is not required to, be owned or managed by an entity or organization *(**NCZO Sec. 8107-41.3.4**)*.

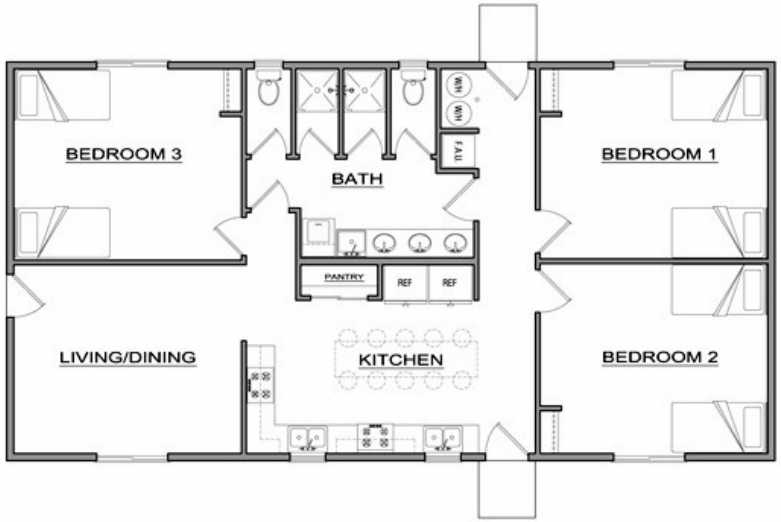


*Image: Example floorplan of a 6-person bunkhouse for farmworkers.*

## What types of permits are needed?

Farmworker Group Quarters that meet all applicable standards may be approved with a discretionary **Planned Development Permit** approved by the Planning Director; and a **Building Permit** from the Building and Safety Division.

| Standards for Farmworker Group Quarters *(NCZO Sec. 8107-41.3.4)* | |
|---|---|
| **Allowable Zoning** *(**NCZO Sec. 8105-4**)* | • Agricultural Exclusive (AE)<br>• Open Space (OS)<br>• Rural Agricultural (RA) |
| **Location** | • May NOT be placed on farmland designated Prime or Statewide Importance (unless no alternative location on the lot)<br>• May NOT be on land actively used for crop cultivation<br>• MUST be located near existing roads and structures |
| **Size** | Minimum of 50 sq. ft. of personal living space per occupant (for dormitory style) |
| **Lot Size** | Minimum 5 acres |
| **Height** | Must meet requirements of the zone it is in (See ***NCZO Sec. 8106***) |
| **Lot** | |
| **Setbacks** | • 20 feet from street property line<br>• 10 feet from other property lines<br>• 6 feet from other structures<br>• 75 feet from livestock/poultry facilities |
| **Parking** | One (1) space for every 4 beds (***NCZO Sec. 8108-4.7***) |
| **Occupancy Criteria** *(**NCZO Sec. 8107-41.2**)* | • Can ONLY be occupied by principally employed farmworkers within Ventura County for agricultural activities *(includes full-time, full-time seasonal, temporary or part-time farmworkers)*<br>• Only for individual farmworkers. Can NOT be occupied by families.<br>• Deed restriction for units MUST be recorded with County Recorder |
| **Other** | • Exterior lighting used must be low profile, directed downward, fully-shielded, and for security only<br>• If the building has > 36 residents, landscaping, recreational space, and open space must be provided (See ***Sec. 8107-41.3.3(d)***)<br>• Accessory uses and structures MAY be included with Planning Director approval (food service, laundry/storage facilities, resource centers)<br>• Annual verification of employment is required *(**Sec. 8107-41.2.3**)* |

# Farmworker/Animal Caretaker Temporary Trailers

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## What are they?

A maximum of ONE self-contained Farmworker/Animal Caretaker Temporary Trailer can be used to provide limited-term housing for seasonal agricultural workers. The temporary trailer can only be occupied by full-time farmworkers or animal caretakers who are employed on the same lot where the trailer is located. Other members of the worker's household may also occupy the trailer.

The trailer may only be situated and inhabited for 180 consecutive days in any 12-month period, unless a one-time extension of additional 90 days is granted by the Planning Director (See ***NCZO Sec. 8107-41.3.5(a)(6)***)

## What types of permits are needed?

Temporary Trailers that meet all applicable standards may be approved with a ministerial **Zoning Clearance** (i.e., a **Limited Term Trailer Permit**) from the Planning Division. Applicant must submit an affidavit affirming use of trailer for housing seasonal agricultural workers only.

After Zoning Clearance is issued, all electrical and plumbing connections must be approved and inspected by the Building and Safety Division prior to occupancy.

| Standards for Farmworker/Animal Caretaker Temporary Trailers *(NCZO 8107-41.3.5)* | |
|---|---|
| **Allowable Zoning** *(NCZO Sec. 8105-4)* | • Agricultural Exclusive (AE)<br>• Open Space (OS) |
| **Type of Trailer Allowed** | • MUST be a motor home, travel trailer, truck camper, recreational vehicle, or camping trailer<br>• MUST be either self-propelled, truck-mounted, or permanently towable without a permit under the CA Vehicle Code<br>• MUST be self-contained and habitable (as defined in ***NCZO Sec. 8107-41.3.5(b)(5)***):<br>◊ MUST provide potable water through internal tank or permanent source<br>◊ MUST dispose wastewater by sewer connection, or regularly serviced internal wastewater tank; Composting toilets are NOT allowed<br>◊ MUST be connected to approved electrical source (except generators)<br>◊ No temporary heating facilities allowed within trailer. |
| **Location** | • May NOT be placed on farmland designated Prime or Statewide Importance (unless no alternative location on the lot)<br>• May NOT be on land actively used for crop cultivation<br>• MUST be on same lot where agricultural workers are employed |
| **Size** | Maximum size of trailer— 320 square feet of living area (not including built-in closets, cabinets, kitchen units, bath, toilet, etc.) |
| **Height and Setbacks** | • Must meet requirements of applicable zone, except where Title 25 of CA Administrative Code is more restrictive<br>• Minimum of 6 feet from other structures |
| **Occupancy Criteria** *(NCZO Sec. 8107-41.2)* | • Can ONLY be occupied by full-time farmworkers or animal caretakers employed on the same lot where trailer is located<br>• Affidavit required affirming use of trailer for seasonal workers |
| **Other** | • Exterior lighting used must be low profile, directed downward, fully-shielded, and for security only<br>• MAY include one picnic table, grill or campfire ring<br>• Can only be situated and inhabited for 180 consecutive days or less in any 12-month period (unless extension is granted) |

# Resources for Agricultural Worker Housing

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## Key NCZO Sections for Reference

While this guide provides a general overview of the Agricultural Worker Housing ordinances, the Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance (NCZO) itself should always be reviewed before you begin the permit application process. Here are some of the most important NCZO Sections to review:

**Agricultural Worker Housing:**

*NCZO Sec. 8107-41*

**Permitted Use Matrix for Open Space, Agricultural, Residential, and Special Purpose Zones:**

*NCZO Sec. 8105-4*

**Permitting and Development Standards for Agricultural Worker Housing:**

*NCZO Sec. 8107-41.3*

**Employee Housing (Allowed per state HCD requirements):**

*NCZO Sec. 8107-26*

**Definitions:**

*NCZO Sec. 8102-0*

## Useful Links

If you are interested in building agricultural worker housing on your property, here are some useful webpages you may want to visit as you begin the planning and permitting process:

**Ventura County Planning Division:**

https://vcrma.org/divisions/planning/

**Ventura County Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance:**

https://vcrma.org/divisions/planning/county-ordinances/

**Agricultural Worker Housing:**

https://vcrma.org/divisions/planning/agricultural-worker-housing-regulations/

**Standardized Plans for Farmworker/Animal Caretaker Dwelling Units:**

https://vcrma.org/divisions/planning/standardized-plans-for-accessory-dwelling-units-and-farmworker-animal-caretaker-dwelling-units/

**Ventura County Building & Safety Division:**

https://vcrma.org/divisions/building-and-safety/

**Ventura County Environmental Health Division:**

https://vcrma.org/divisions/environmental-health/

**County of Ventura Farmworker Resource Program (for Housing and Workplace Assistance):**

https://www.ventura.org/human-services-agency/farmworker-resources/