

CHAPTER 657

NUISANCES

Referred to in §6B.56, 318.6, 318.11, 364.22B, 446.7

Anhydrous ammonia plants, see §200.21
Farm operations, see §352.11

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657.1 Nuisance — what constitutes — action to abate — electric utility defense.

1. Whatever is injurious to health, indecent, or unreasonably offensive to the senses, or an obstruction to the free use of property, so as essentially to interfere unreasonably with the comfortable enjoyment of life or property, is a nuisance, and a civil action by ordinary proceedings may be brought to enjoin and abate the nuisance and to recover damages sustained on account of the nuisance. A petition filed under [this subsection](#) shall include the legal description of the real property upon which the nuisance is located unless the nuisance is not situated on or confined to a parcel of real property or is portable or capable of being removed from the real property.

2. Notwithstanding [subsection 1](#), in an action to abate a nuisance against an electric utility, an electric utility may assert a defense of comparative fault as set out in [section 668.3](#) if the electric utility demonstrates that in the course of providing electric services to its customers it has complied with engineering and safety standards as adopted by the utilities board of the department of commerce, and if the electric utility has secured all permits and approvals, as required by state law and local ordinances, necessary to perform activities alleged to constitute a nuisance.

[C51, §2131 – 2133; R60, §3713 – 3715; C73, §3331; C97, §4302; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §12395; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §657.1]

[95 Acts, ch 195, §34; 2004 Acts, ch 1077, §1; 2005 Acts, ch 3, §108; 2010 Acts, ch 1050, §8](#)

657.2 What deemed nuisances.

The following are nuisances:

1. The erecting, continuing, or using any building or other place for the exercise of any trade, employment, or manufacture, which, by occasioning noxious exhalations, unreasonably offensive smells, or other annoyances, becomes injurious and dangerous to the health, comfort, or property of individuals or the public.

2. The causing or suffering any offal, filth, or noisome substance to be collected or to remain in any place to the prejudice of others.

3. The obstructing or impeding without legal authority the passage of any navigable river, harbor, or collection of water.

4. The corrupting or rendering unwholesome or impure the water of any river, stream, or pond, or unlawfully diverting the same from its natural course or state, to the injury or prejudice of others.

5. The obstructing or encumbering by fences, buildings, or otherwise the public roads, private ways, streets, alleys, commons, landing places, or burying grounds.

6. Houses of ill fame, kept for the purpose of prostitution and lewdness, gambling houses, places resorted to by persons participating in criminal gang activity prohibited by [chapter 723A](#), or places resorted to by persons using controlled substances, as defined in [section 124.101, subsection 5](#), in violation of law, or houses where drunkenness, quarreling, fighting, or breaches of the peace are carried on or permitted to the disturbance of others.

7. Billboards, signboards, and advertising signs, whether erected and constructed on public or private property, which so obstruct and impair the view of any portion or part of a public street, avenue, highway, boulevard, or alley or of a railroad or street railway track as to render dangerous the use thereof.

8. Any object or structure erected within one thousand feet of the limits of any municipal or regularly established airport or landing place, which may endanger or obstruct aerial navigation, including take-off and landing, unless such object or structure constitutes a proper use or enjoyment of the land on which the same is located.

9. The depositing or storing of flammable junk, such as old rags, rope, cordage, rubber, bones, and paper, by dealers in such articles within the fire limits of a city, unless in a building of fireproof construction, is a public nuisance.

10. The emission of dense smoke, noxious fumes, or fly ash in cities is a nuisance and cities may provide the necessary rules for inspection, regulation and control.

11. Dense growth of all weeds, vines, brush, or other vegetation in any city so as to constitute a health, safety, or fire hazard is a public nuisance.

12. Trees infected with Dutch elm disease in cities.

[C51, §2759, 2761; R60, §4409, 4411; C73, §4089, 4091; C97, §5078, 5080; S13, §713-a, -b, 1056-a19; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §5740, 5741, 6567, 6743, 12396; C46, 50, §368.3, 368.4, 416.92, 420.54, 657.2; C54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §657.2]

[92 Acts, ch 1163, §116](#); [92 Acts, ch 1231, §56](#); [95 Acts, ch 195, §35](#); [98 Acts, ch 1072, §1](#); [2021 Acts, ch 80, §371](#)

Referred to in [§654B.1](#)
Subsection 8 amended

657.2A Indexing of petition.

1. When a petition affecting real property is filed by a governmental entity under [this chapter](#), the clerk of the district court shall index the petition pursuant to [section 617.10](#), if the legal description of the affected property is included in or attached to the petition.

2. After filing the petition with the clerk of the district court, the governmental entity shall also file the petition in the office of the county treasurer. The county treasurer shall include a notation of the pendency of the action in the county system, as defined in [section 445.1](#), until the judgment of the court is satisfied or until the action is dismissed. Pursuant to [section 446.7](#), an affected property that is subject to a pending action shall not be offered for sale by the county treasurer at tax sale.

[2010 Acts, ch 1050, §9](#)

657.3 Penalty — abatement.

A person who is convicted of erecting, causing, or continuing a public or common nuisance as provided in [this chapter](#), or at common law when the common law has not been modified or repealed by statute, if no other punishment for the offense is specially provided, shall be guilty of an aggravated misdemeanor. The court may order the nuisance abated and issue a warrant as provided in [this chapter](#).

[C51, §2762; R60, §4412; C73, §4092; C97, §5081; S13, §5081; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §12397; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §657.3]

[2020 Acts, ch 1063, §366](#); [2021 Acts, ch 80, §372](#)

Section amended

657.4 Process.

When upon indictment, complaint, or civil action any person is found guilty of erecting, causing, or continuing a nuisance, the court before whom such finding is had may, in addition to the fine imposed, if any, or to the judgment for damages or cost for which a separate execution may issue, order that such nuisance be abated or removed at the expense of the defendant, and, after inquiry into and estimating as nearly as may be the sum necessary to defray the expenses of such abatement, the court may issue a warrant therefor.

[C51, §2763; R60, §4413; C73, §4093; C97, §5082; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §12398; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §657.4]

657.5 Reserved.

657.6 Stay of execution.

Instead of issuing a warrant, the court may order the warrant to be stayed upon motion of the defendant, if the defendant enters into an undertaking to the state, in such sum and with such surety as the court may direct, under the condition that either the defendant will discontinue the nuisance or that, within a time limited by the court, and not exceeding six months, the defendant will cause the nuisance to be abated and removed, as either is directed by the court. Upon the defendant's failure to perform the condition of the defendant's undertaking, the surety shall be forfeited, and the court, upon being satisfied of a default, may order the warrant forthwith to issue, and action may be brought on the undertaking.

[C51, §2765; R60, §4415; C73, §4095; C97, §5084; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §12400; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §657.6]

[2019 Acts, ch 59, §223](#)

657.7 Expenses — how collected.

The expense of abating a nuisance by virtue of a warrant can be collected by the officer in the same manner as damages and costs are collected on execution, except that the materials of any buildings, fences, or other things that may be removed as a nuisance may be first levied upon and sold by the officer, and if any of the proceeds remain after satisfying the expense of the removal, such balance must be paid by the officer to the defendant, or to the owner of the property levied upon; and if said proceeds are not sufficient to pay such expenses, the officer must collect the residue thereof.

[C51, §2766; R60, §4416; C73, §4096; C97, §5085; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §12401; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §657.7]

657.8 Feedlots.

[This chapter](#) shall apply to the operation of a livestock feedlot, only as provided in [chapter 172D](#).

[C77, 79, 81, §657.8]

657.9 Shooting ranges.

1. Before a person improves property acquired to establish, use, and maintain a shooting range by the erection of buildings, breastworks, ramparts, or other works or before a person substantially changes the existing use of a shooting range, the person shall obtain approval of the county zoning commission or the city zoning commission, whichever is appropriate. The appropriate commission shall comply with [section 335.8](#) or [414.6](#). In the event a county or city does not have a zoning commission, the county board of supervisors or the city council shall comply with [section 335.6](#) or [414.5](#) before granting the approval.

2. A person who acquires title to or who owns real property adversely affected by the use of property with a permanently located and improved range shall not maintain a nuisance action against the person who owns the range to restrain, enjoin, or impede the use of the range where there has not been a substantial change in the nature of the use of the range.

3. [This section](#) does not prohibit actions for negligence or recklessness in the operation of the range or by a person using the range.

[[82 Acts, ch 1193, §1](#)]

[84 Acts, ch 1067, §49](#); [2018 Acts, ch 1041, §112](#)

Referred to in [§335.26, 414.26](#)

657.10 Mediation notice.

Notwithstanding [this chapter](#), a person, required under [chapter 654B](#) to participate in mediation, shall not begin a proceeding subject to [this chapter](#) until the person receives a mediation release under [section 654B.8](#), or until the court determines after notice and hearing that one of the following applies:

1. The time delay required for the mediation would cause the person to suffer irreparable harm.

2. The dispute involves a claim which should be resolved as a class action.
[90 Acts, ch 1143, §27](#)

657.11 Animal feeding operations.

1. The purpose of [this section](#) is to protect animal agricultural producers who manage their operations according to state and federal requirements from the costs of defending nuisance suits, which negatively impact upon Iowa's competitive economic position and discourage persons from entering into animal agricultural production. [This section](#) is intended to promote the expansion of animal agriculture in this state by protecting persons engaged in the care and feeding of animals. The general assembly has balanced all competing interests and declares its intent to protect and preserve animal agricultural production operations.

2. An animal feeding operation, as defined in [section 459.102](#), shall not be found to be a public or private nuisance under [this chapter](#) or under principles of common law, and the animal feeding operation shall not be found to interfere with another person's comfortable use and enjoyment of the person's life or property under any other cause of action. However, [this section](#) shall not apply if the person bringing the action proves that an injury to the person or damage to the person's property is proximately caused by either of the following:

a. The failure to comply with a federal statute or regulation or a state statute or rule which applies to the animal feeding operation.

b. Both of the following:

(1) The animal feeding operation unreasonably and for substantial periods of time interferes with the person's comfortable use and enjoyment of the person's life or property.

(2) The animal feeding operation failed to use existing prudent generally accepted management practices reasonable for the operation.

3. a. [This section](#) does not apply to a person during any period that the person is classified as a chronic violator under [this subsection](#) as to any confinement feeding operation in which the person holds a controlling interest, as defined by rules adopted by the department of natural resources. [This section](#) shall apply to the person on and after the date that the person is removed from the classification of chronic violator. For purposes of [this subsection](#), "confinement feeding operation" means an animal feeding operation in which animals are confined to areas which are totally roofed, and which are regulated by the department of natural resources or the environmental protection commission.

b. (1) A person shall be classified as a chronic violator if the person has committed three or more violations as described in [this subsection](#) prior to, on, or after July 1, 1996. In addition, in relation to each violation, the person must have been subject to either of the following:

(a) The assessment of a civil penalty by the department or the commission in an amount equal to three thousand dollars or more.

(b) A court order or judgment for a legal action brought by the attorney general after referral by the department or commission.

(2) Each violation must have occurred within five years prior to the date of the latest violation, counting any violation committed by a confinement feeding operation in which the person holds a controlling interest. A violation occurs on the date the department issues an administrative order to the person assessing a civil penalty of three thousand dollars or more, or on the date the department notifies a person in writing that the department will recommend that the commission refer, or the commission refers the case to the attorney general for legal action, or the date of entry of the court order or judgment, whichever occurs first. A violation under [this subsection](#) shall not be counted if the civil penalty ultimately imposed is less than three thousand dollars, the department or commission does not refer the action to the attorney general, the attorney general does not take legal action, or a court order or judgment is not entered against the person. A person shall be removed from the classification of chronic violator on the date on which the person and all confinement feeding operations in which the person holds a controlling interest have committed less than three violations described in [this subsection](#) for the prior five years.

c. For purposes of counting violations, a continuing and uninterrupted violation shall be considered as one violation. Different types of violations shall be counted as separate

violations regardless of whether the violations were committed during the same period. The violation must be a violation of a state statute, or a rule adopted by the department, which applies to a confinement feeding operation and any related animal feeding operation structure, including an anaerobic lagoon, earthen manure storage basin, formed manure storage structure, or egg washwater storage structure; or any related pollution control device or practice. The structure, device, or practice must be part of the confinement feeding operation. The violation must be one of the following:

(1) Constructing or operating a related animal feeding operation structure or installing or using a related pollution control device or practice, for which the person must obtain a permit, in violation of statute or rules adopted by the department, including the terms or conditions of the permit.

(2) Intentionally making a false statement or misrepresenting information to the department as part of an application for a construction permit for the related animal feeding operation structure, or the installation of the related pollution control device or practice, for which the person must obtain a construction permit from the department.

(3) Failing to obtain a permit or approval by the department for a permit to construct or operate a confinement feeding operation or use a related animal feeding operation structure or pollution control device or practice, for which the person must obtain a permit from the department.

(4) Operating a confinement feeding operation, including a related animal feeding operation structure or pollution control device or practice, which causes pollution to the waters of the state, if the pollution was caused intentionally, or caused by a failure to take measures required to abate the pollution which resulted from an act of God.

(5) Failing to submit a manure management plan as required, or operating a confinement feeding operation required to have a manure management plan without having submitted the manure management plan.

4. [This section](#) shall apply regardless of the established date of operation or expansion of the animal feeding operation. A defense against a cause of action provided in [this section](#) includes but is not limited to a defense for actions arising out of the care and feeding of animals; the handling or transportation of animals; the treatment or disposal of manure resulting from animals; the transportation and application of animal manure; and the creation of noise, odor, dust, or fumes arising from an animal feeding operation.

5. If a court determines that a claim is frivolous, a person who brings the claim as part of a losing cause of action against a person who may raise a defense under [this section](#) shall be liable to the person against whom the action was brought for all costs and expenses incurred in the defense of the action.

6. [This section](#) does not apply to an injury to a person or damages to property caused by the animal feeding operation before May 21, 1998.

[95 Acts, ch 195, §36; 96 Acts, ch 1118, §1; 98 Acts, ch 1209, §38, 39, 53; 99 Acts, ch 114, §58, 59; 2013 Acts, ch 30, §261; 2014 Acts, ch 1026, §132](#)

Referred to in [§266.43, 266.44, 266.45, 657.11A](#)

657.11A Animal agriculture — promotion of responsible animal feeding operations.

1. *a. Findings.* The general assembly finds that important public interests are advanced by preserving and encouraging the expansion of responsible animal agricultural production in this state which provides employment opportunities in and economic growth for rural Iowa, contributes tax revenues to the state and to local communities, and protects our valuable natural resources.

b. Purpose. The purpose of [this section](#) is to encourage persons involved in animal agriculture to adopt existing prudent and generally utilized management practices for their animal feeding operations, thereby enhancing the fundamental role of animal agriculture in this state by providing a reasonable level of protection to persons engaged in animal agricultural production from certain types of nuisance actions.

c. Declaration. The general assembly has balanced all competing interests and declares its intent to preserve and enhance responsible animal agricultural production, specifically

animal agricultural producers in this state who use existing prudent and generally utilized management practices reasonable for their animal feeding operations.

2. Except as otherwise provided by [this section](#), an animal feeding operation, as defined in [section 459.102](#), found to be a public or private nuisance under [this chapter](#) or under principles of common law, or found to interfere with another person's comfortable use and enjoyment of the person's life or property under any other cause of action, shall be conclusively presumed to be a permanent nuisance and not a temporary or continuing nuisance under principles of common law, and shall be subject to compensatory damages only as provided in [subsection 3](#).

3. Compensatory damages awarded to a person bringing an action alleging that an animal feeding operation is a public or private nuisance, or an interference with the person's comfortable use and enjoyment of the person's life or property under any other cause of action, shall not exceed the following:

a. The person's share of compensatory property damages due to any diminution in the fair market value of the person's real property proximately caused by the animal feeding operation. The fair market value of the real property is deemed to equal the price that a buyer who is willing but not compelled to buy and a seller who is willing but not compelled to sell would accept for the real property. The person's share of any compensatory property damages must be based on the person's share of the ownership interest in the real property. For purposes of [this section](#), ownership interest means holding legal or equitable title to real property in fee simple, as a life estate, or as a leasehold interest.

b. The person's compensatory damages due to the person's past, present, and future adverse health condition. This determination shall be made utilizing only objective and documented medical evidence that the nuisance or interference with the comfortable use and enjoyment of the person's life or property was the proximate cause of the person's adverse health condition.

c. The person's compensatory special damages proximately caused by the animal feeding operation, including without limitation, annoyance and the loss of comfortable use and enjoyment of real property. However, the total damages awarded to a person under this paragraph "c" shall not exceed one and one-half times the sum of any damages awarded to the person for the person's share of the total compensatory property damages awarded under paragraph "a" plus any compensatory damages awarded to the person under paragraph "b".

4. [This section](#) shall apply to an animal feeding operation in the same manner as [section 657.11, subsections 4 and 5](#).

5. [This section](#) shall not apply if the person bringing the action proves that the public or private nuisance or interference with another person's comfortable use and enjoyment of the person's life or property under any other cause of action is proximately caused by any of the following:

a. The failure to comply with a federal statute or regulation or a state statute or rule which applies to the animal feeding operation.

b. The failure to use existing prudent generally utilized management practices reasonable for the animal feeding operation.

6. [This section](#) does not apply to a person during the time in which the person is classified as a habitual violator pursuant to [section 459.604](#).

7. [This section](#) does not apply to a cause of action that accrued prior to March 29, 2017. [2017 Acts, ch 17, §1, 2](#)