Minimum Requirements for Farmhouses

South Dakota State University Cooperative Extension

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Minimum Requirements For Farmhouses

Recommended by the United States Department of Agriculture

The Department of Agriculture offers these minimum standards as part of its contribution towards formulating plans for postwar programs of rural welfare.

It should be noted that these minimum requirements are not intended as a complete guide for planning or building a house; neither will they meet the needs of many who desire a far more comfortable home than is suggested here.

In recommending minimum requirements for farmhouses, the United States Department of Agriculture has considered the essentials of good social and healthful living.

CHOOSING A SITE

(1) Well-drained; (2) the house suitably located in relation to farm buildings; (3) safe disposal of all refuse; (4) a good supply of water at all times—preferably from wells, springs, or cisterns; (5) for privacy—to avoid dust and noise, the house should not be closer than 50 feet from a surfaced road or 100 to 150 feet from a dirt road.

CONSTRUCTION FEATURES

Contributing to Comfort and Livability

House—substantial enough to be usable for 30 years or more without excessive maintenance.

Floors—tight, finished to permit easy cleaning.

Walls—tight, insulated. Inner surfaces should be durable, easily cleaned or renewed, finished with colors which reflect high percentage of light.

Ceiling—in addition to features for walls, insulated with a minimum of ½-inch insulation board or the equivalent, height not less than approximately 7 feet 4 inches (based on use of 7-foot studding).

Foundation—continuous between piers when first floor is raised above the ground, openings screened in summer and closed in winter, openings so arranged to permit cross draft for summer ventilation.

Roof—watertight at all seasons.

Windows—glazed and screened. All other openings to the exterior screened, except to screened porches.

SPACE REQUIREMENTS

For Families with Both Boys and Girls

Possible arrangements—living, dining, and kitchen space combined; living room and kitchen with dining space in one or the other; separate dining room not recommended for minimum house because of additional cost.

Size of Rooms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>MINIMUM SPACE ALLOWANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Living-dining space</td>
<td>210 Square Feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living space alone</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen-dining space</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen space alone</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Kitchen work space should be rectangular, approximately 9 ft. in width. Equipment opposite coal- or wood-burning range should not be closer than 4 ft.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living, dining, and kitchen space</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedrooms—minimum of three</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom or at least space for future bathroom</td>
<td>25 or 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work porch or workroom</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage Space</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothes closet for each bedroom</td>
<td>3 ft. x 22 in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closet for outside wraps and general storage (near most used entrance)</td>
<td>3 ft. x 24 in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linen and bedding closet</td>
<td>2 ft. x 22 in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning and supply closet (in workroom or work porch)</td>
<td>3 ft. x 18 in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space for storage of laundry equipment</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Kitchen Storage**

An enameled iron sink (16” x 30”) should be provided with work surfaces—at least 2 feet x 3 feet to the right and 2 feet x 30 inches to the left. A drain should be built into the cabinet.

A 6-inch drawer and 12-inch sliding shelf should be built below each work surface, with doors for each space. It is desirable to have toe space at the base of every working surface.

Above work surfaces and sink (except where windows interfere) should be three shelves 12 inches deep, except the lowest shelf above the sink, which should be only 4 inches deep. The bottom shelf should be at least 15 inches above the work surface; the third shelf, not more than 70 inches above the floor. At least one shelf adjustable.

**Food Storage**

Plan not less than 24 square feet of food-storage floor space in or near the house. When fruit and root vegetables are stored in this space, the minimum is 35 square feet of floor space. It should be ventilated and protected from freezing or excessive heat. Brace the floor to support the load, and screen the ventilator.

**Arrangement for Privacy and Convenience**

Doors to all bedrooms, bath, or toilet rooms should be provided.

Doors to closets are desirable.

Sole access to any room or bath should not be through a bedroom.

Outside doors and porches should be sheltered wherever possible and should give a convenient entrance from driveway and path to the barn. The back door should be arranged so that persons passing through will not cross the kitchen work area.

**LIGHT AND VENTILATION**

Glazed-window area—not less than 10 per cent of floor area.

Window area that can be opened—not less than 5 per cent of floor area.

Living room, kitchen, and bedrooms—cross ventilation through outside windows or door or through another room. Cross ventilation of bedroom should not be through another bedroom.

**ELECTRIC WIRING**

House should be wired when built. Minimum outlets and switches desirable are:

- Ceiling lights—kitchen, work porch, over dining area, and in living room (if separate).
- Wall switches—at front and rear doors to control nearest ceiling light.
- Double convenience outlets—two in living room, one in kitchen, one in work porch or workroom.

**HEATING**

In addition to the kitchen stove, there should be a heater to maintain a minimum temperature of 65° F. at a level 3 feet 6 inches above the floor of the living room (and bathroom, if there is one). The heater should be located to provide overflow heat to bedrooms and dressing areas.

The flue area (inside chimneys) should be not less than standard 8½ x 8½ inch flue lining for wood or coal range or single heater. If range and heater are both connected to the same flue or there is a fireplace, the minimum area should be not less than standard 8½ x 13 inch flue lining.

**FUEL STORAGE**

The fuel storage space should be convenient to the house, and adequate for storing not less than one month’s supply of fuel.

**WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION**

A tested water supply should be either piped to the kitchen sink or available from the pump adjacent to the work porch or workroom.

For the kitchen sink only, the drain should be connected with a dry-well disposal system or with underground tile a safe distance from the water supply. If possible, a bathroom should be provided, equipped with indoor flush toilet, wash bowl, and tub or shower. At least, space should be provided for future installation. For the bathroom, a septic tank for sanitary waste is necessary. Outdoor toilets should always meet specifications of Public Health Service and state or local health authorities.

**HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Wells, plumbing, septic tanks, outdoor toilets, electric wiring and fixtures, chimneys, heating installations, and construction in general should comply with recognized standards of health and safety. Plans for installation should be checked against state and local regulations if any are in effect for the area. Information obtained from the Rural Electrification Administration may be helpful in connection with electric installations.