

Guidelines for Field Scouting, Site Visits, Result/Demonstration Work, and Walk-ins

Situation: This guideline has been developed to address the following general items.

- Many IPM Agents have contracted fields to be regularly scouted for pests and agronomic development.
- Specialists, Program Specialists and County Agents are often asked to visit particular fields to ascertain problems encountered by the clientele.
- County Agents and other Extension personnel are often asked to make site visits to diagnose stakeholder problems and collect specimens for diagnostic testing.
- Extension personnel, including student workers, are involved in working fields for test plots and other result/demonstrations.
- Stakeholders will sometimes bring samples for inspection to the county offices and Extension/Research Centers.

Travel restrictions: County based personnel are not supposed to travel on official business outside of the county/counties for which they are responsible. Extension Specialists and Program Specialists should avoid travel beyond the geographical area for which they are responsible. **All site visit travel, regardless of distance must be approved through the identified approval process.** Given the dynamic nature of the COVID-19 situation, be sure to consult the latest guidance on travel restrictions.

Travel Approval:

If these activities can be delayed they should be delayed as long as possible. However, we know that some of these activities are deemed mission critical and time sensitive.

Regularly scheduled field scouting: If you have fields that you regularly scout, submit a scouting plan that describes where you go, and the dates those sites will be visited. Reporting date ranges of a few days is acceptable. These plans should be submitted to the District Extension Administrator, IPM Coordinator and/or associate department head who will forward these to the Director's Office.

Irregular site visits: If you are requested to visit a field to ascertain a problem, gather information from the client to determine the risk associated with the issue. Determine the date (or range of a few dates) the visit will occur and submit a request to conduct the visit with your immediate supervisor. The supervisor will determine necessity of the site visit and if critical will forward to the Director's Office for approval.

Applied research activities: We understand that preplanned experimental designs (including but not limited to planting, maintenance of plots) are time critical activities. Develop a plan that describes where you go, and the dates of the activities and personnel involved in that activity (minimize number of personnel to essential only). The plan should include travel by individuals in separate vehicles to maintain social distancing. Reporting date ranges of a few days is acceptable. These plans should be submitted to the immediate supervisor (DEA and/or ADH) who will forward these to the Director's Office for approval if they concur that the activities are critical.

Laboratory sample assessment: Often samples must be processed in the laboratory to determine the causative agent involved. When acquiring the samples in person, follow the procedure outlined in irregular site visits. For submission of specimen, please contact the appropriate Plant Disease Diagnostic Lab. At current time, the TX Plant Diagnostic Labs does not accept walk-in samples. Samples should be mailed or a courier service utilized – Next day service is highly encouraged to maintain the integrity of the sample. TX Plant Diagnostic Labs: TPDDL-College Station (<http://plantclinic.tamu.edu>) 979-845-8032 or TX High Plain Plant Disease Diagnostic Lab (<https://thppdd-lab.tamu.edu>) [Specializes in Small Grains and Row Crops]. Samples should be accompanied with the appropriate submission forms.

Best Practices when conducting scouting/site visits/applied research activities: Avoid contact with other people. Do not take others along with you unless absolutely necessary. If someone must join you at a site do not travel in the same vehicle, do not have a meal together and maintain social distancing at all times (6 feet or more). Avoid face-to-face interaction with the client when possible. Ideally, scout the field or site alone and provide information to the client via phone, text, email, or other non-face-to-face venue. If the situation requires face-to-face interaction with the client, practice good social distancing. While travelling to the site location avoid interacting with groups of people (i.e. when stopping for fuel or food, etc.). If it is necessary for more than one individual to be present to establish, monitor, or harvest a plot, please obtain clearance through each of the individuals' direct supervisors prior to the activity.

County Extension and Research/Extension Center Walk-ins: Encourage stakeholders to send photos and to use the diagnostic services already provided by Texas A&M AgriLife. Growers/farmers/homeowners should be notified (via door signage or text on county websites) about sample drop-off procedures during this time. They should call before dropping at the specified location. Then the extension personnel can pick these up using the non-pharmaceutical interventions specified by CDC, and without face-to-face contact (<https://www.cdc.gov/nonpharmaceutical-interventions/index.html>).



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE COMMISSIONER SID MILLER

Ag Pesticide Applicator and Course Provider Update 2020 Covid 19 (Coronavirus) Pandemic

To address the Continuing Education Unit (CEU) and licensure requirements for Ag Pesticide applicators, the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) will work with the ag pesticide applicators and CEU course providers of Texas during this critical time. Licensed applicators with expiring licenses or needing CEU's will be allowed to renew their license even if they have not met their CEU requirement for their current licensing period through December 31, 2020. Due to the restrictions of meetings in place by the Governor and many cities, many CEU events have been canceled. The TDA will work to insure all the state's pesticide applicators are able to acquire their licenses and required continuing education courses in a safe and effective manner during this time frame. Once the restrictions have been lifted and courses are scheduled again, **applicators will be required to obtain their required CEUs for their respective license classification for each licensing period.** By allowing a CEU exemption, this will allow the applicators to maintain their ability to perform pesticide applications for pests, weeds, insects etc., without disrupting daily business functions. Applicators are encouraged to complete online courses even if online courses were completed the previous licensing period.

COMMERCIAL, NON-COMMERCIAL AND NON-COMMERCIAL POLITICAL APPLICATORS

For licenses expiring in 2020 ONLY: TDA will exempt commercial, non-commercial and non-commercial political applicators who have taken online or correspondence courses within the last year. The TDA Rule 7.24 (t) (2) does not allow for online or correspondence courses to be taken 2 years consecutively. In light of the unusual circumstances due to Covid 19 (coronavirus), TDA will allow online or correspondence courses to be taken 2 consecutive years. This exemption will be for the current 2020 licensing period. Commercial, non-commercial and non-commercial political pesticide applicators are required to obtain 5 CEUs per licensing period.

PRIVATE APPLICATORS

For licenses expiring in 2020 ONLY: The TDA will also exempt private applicators from the TDA Rule 7.24 (v) (5). This rule does not allow a private applicator to acquire more than 10 CEUs through correspondence courses. During this quarantine time frame, private applicators will be allowed to acquire **ALL** of their CEUs through correspondence courses (online). Private applicators are required to obtain 15 CEUs per 5-year licensing period.

CEU COURSE PROVIDERS

For CEU course providers, live courses that have already received TDA approval may continue to be offered via-live web-based courses. These courses must have the capability for the audience to ask questions and/or interact with the speaker. Course providers are asked to notify TDA of interactive course dates so that applicators can attend available courses during this period. TDA will update their website with course dates. Course providers are asked to continue to offer courses and may submit new CEU courses for approval by emailing a completed [PA-409](#) to recertcourses@TexasAgriculture.gov. TDA

request that providers contact TDA prior to any course given via a live, web-based program (Zoom, Facebook Live, etc.) so that staff can monitor/participate in the course. All courses will be posted on the [TDA website](#).

TESTING

All testing is suspended at this time. PSI has indicated that they will cease operations until at least April 13, 2020.

IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE:

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Pesticide CEU Training Guide

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension CEA Guide

Auxin Training Information

The Auxin Specific Applicator Training covers the application requirements for the use of approved dicamba and 2,4-D auxin formulations.

Effective February 1, 2020 auxin trainings will no longer be exempt from the minimum \$10/person AgriLife Extension fee-based programming guidelines. All AgriLife Extension personnel conducting these trainings will be expected to collect this fee.

FACE-TO-FACE TRAINING

If an outside entity requests an auxin face-to-face group training, a \$10/person fee-based programming fee must be collected. A suitable alternative to this method would be following the instructions below under "CEU Programs" for conducting a live webinar to deliver the auxin training video or slide presentation.

ONLINE TRAINING

For individuals, convenience trainings will be offered through [AgriLife Learn](#) and will have a \$25/person fee-based programming fee. This fee will be paid through the online payment service. There are two options for the individual training:

Self-enroll: Individuals can access and self-enroll in the online course without going through their local AgriLife Extension County Office. The course is open and available to anyone.

Assisted-enroll: For those who wish, services will be offered at their local AgriLife Extension County Office to assist them in accessing and enrolling in the online course.

CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

- This training satisfies the US EPA requirement for mandatory dicamba applicator training
- This training satisfies the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) requirement for auxin specific training for approved dicamba and 2,4-D formulations
- This training is not a substitute for the state-specific Certified Private Applicator training, which is required to purchase and use Restricted Use Pesticides
- This training qualifies for 1 CEU of laws and regs

Effective March 21, 2020

- To receive a certificate of completion for this course, participants must obtain a score of 100% or greater on the online Auxin Specific Applicator Test. The learner may retake the test as often as is necessary.
- This certification permits use of approved auxin formulations for the 2020 season only.

Learners can gain access to the course by going to [AgriLife Learn](#) and browsing for the course or by this direct link: <https://agrilifelearn.tamu.edu/product?catalog=AGCH-001>.

CEU Programs

TDA has approved web-based delivery, through June 1, 2020, for CEU training that would traditionally be conducted face-to-face. Agents can conduct web-based training activities to host applicators needing pesticide CEUs by following the procedures stipulated in the "[TDA Course Accreditation Guide](#)." Courses cannot be recorded for later broadcast, as those are considered "Correspondence Activities," which require TDA approval, course examination(s), roster submission and records retention.

Distance technology meetings may be conducted through the Local commodity committees as they have done in the past with the county and multi-county and district face-to-face meetings. They must follow all Auxin and Pesticide CEU procedures and regulations, remembering these have to be "Live" events.

CEAs would be responsible for collecting TDA license numbers, ensuring attendance and distributing certificates as well as submitting rosters to TDA within 14 days as with traditional programs.

Registration: [AgriLife Conference Services](#) will handle registrations for webinars. If someone wants AgriLife Conference Services to host registration and payment processing for an online webinar, they can go to the [About Us page](#) on our website and complete the appropriate Registration Questionnaire.

The fastest turnaround for a registration to go live on the site is two business days after receiving a complete and final Registration Questionnaire.

Once the webinar is live on the website, the registrant would go online to register. Registrants can pay via credit card, select to mail a check, or receive an invoice (information about our Payment Options is on the About Us page of our website). If registrants pay with a credit card, they are emailed a confirmation that contains directions on how to access the webinar. If they indicate they are mailing a check, those instructions will be emailed once the check is posted. If they wish to receive an invoice, once the required purchase order and W9 is received, they will be emailed the instructions to access the webinar. AgriLife Conference Services cannot distribute unique "key codes" in the enrollment instructions. It would be the same enrollment instructions across the board.

Additional Trainings on AgriLife Learn

AGRICULTURAL APPLICATOR COURSES

[Texas Private Pesticide Applicator Training](#)

Cost: \$75.00

Prepare to take the Private Applicator Exam administered by the Texas Department of Agriculture with this course designed for pesticide applicators in Texas. Private pesticide applicators use or supervise the use of restricted-use or state-limited-use pesticides or herbicides to produce an agricultural commodity.

[Minimizing Spray Drift CEU](#)

Cost: \$15.00

This course is for Texas Department of Agriculture Pesticide Applicators seeking TDA continuing education units (CEUs). This course provides 1 Drift Minimization CEU. Applicators who complete the course will gain knowledge of the factors affecting pesticide drift, such as inversion, spray nozzles, and drift factors.

[Herbicide - Mode of Action CEU](#)

Cost: \$15.00

Those who participate in this course will learn about herbicides, different modes of action, and different herbicide families. Pesticide applicators looking to receive 1 hour of credit for TDA pesticide general CEU can be earned with this course.

[Public Health Pest Management Category Training](#)

Cost: \$160.00

This course is a blended course designed for state, county, local government noncommercial vector control technicians, and seasonal employees of the vector control agencies. Participants will receive certified training that will prepare them for the Public Health pest control category exam with TDA.

STRUCTURAL APPLICATOR COURSES

[20 Hour Structural Pest Control Apprentice Training](#)

Cost: \$395.00

This course is designed to assist pest management companies in training new employees. By taking this course, apprentices and other employees will have the opportunity to receive 20 hours of in-depth training required by the TDA Structural Pest Control Service.

[Texas Lawn and Ornamental Pest Management](#)

Cost: \$130.00

As urban areas expand and homeowners continue to want attractive lawns and landscapes, the use of pesticides to control plant pests has continued to grow. Take this course to become an apprentice and learn about pesticides and their proper use, as well as how to apply them for home, lawn, and other landscapes.

Effective March 21, 2020

[Texas Pest Category Pest Management](#)

Cost: \$130.00

Designed for Technician Apprentices, Technicians, and Certified Applicators with a Pest Category license, or others looking to advance their training in “Pest Category”. Through this course, you will learn basic and advanced instruction in pest management.

[Texas Termite Category Pest Management](#)

Cost: \$150.00

This course is for Technician Apprentices, Technicians, and Certified Applicators licensed in the Termite Category of the Structural Pest Control Service (SPCS), a division of Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA). Participants will gain an advanced understanding of termite identification, biology, and pest management.

[Texas Weed Category Pest Management](#)

Cost: \$130.00

Any plant growing in the wrong place can be a weed. Crepe myrtles growing on a putting green would certainly be weeds. The same goes for bermudagrass growing in flower. Learn the basics of identifying and controlling weeds, as well as cultural practices, equipment, and application and reading labels correctly.