



Navigating Pesticide Licensing in Florida

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ADDITIONAL INDEX WORDS. pesticide, FDACS, Extension

The University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Extension is responsible for Florida pesticide applicator training and certification examinations. With over 15 different categories to choose from, pesticide applicators have a difficult time determining which one applies to their situation. Agriculture and Horticulture agents throughout the state assist clientele with this task. However, many agents are unclear themselves. Three experienced Extension agents developed and delivered an in-service training for other agents and the support staff in the county offices to educate them on how to locate the correct information. Hands-on reading of printed material and interactive online training of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) website were used to improve the Extension agents' knowledge. The results reported by FDACS showed significant improvements in exam administration procedures and reporting.

Florida pesticide applicator licenses fall under three different Florida Statutes: Chapters 388, 482, and 487. Agriculture and Horticulture agents are responsible for administering over 15 exams and provide continuing education units (CEUs) for license renewals. There is a great deal of confusion over what license a person must obtain as well as the requirements to maintain the license. Recently, the CEU approval process was significantly changed in both wording of acceptable course description and in the online process of submittal and reporting. To address the problem, three University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Extension agents developed a training curriculum for other agents and the office support outlining the detailed changes. An in-service training was conducted in two locations explaining the different licenses and assisting agents in determining which exams should be offered based on local clientele needs. Extension

personnel were trained on submitting CEU proposals and entering data into the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) website. Participants learned how to enhance revenue by offering classes that help sustain their county extension programs and proper reporting to UF/IFAS Pesticide Office to ensure payment under the FDACS exam contract. Hands-on activities addressed new online registration and payment method requirements. Twenty-seven individuals from 22 different Florida counties participated. Program evaluations revealed that 100% believed they had improved their ability to assist clientele with the pesticide licensing process. Communications from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services have included remarks on improvements of completed applications submitted by agents, which allowed FDACS to efficiently process the paperwork and quickly return scores to clientele.

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