

Pesticide Training and Certification in Kentucky and Covid 19

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Applying pesticides safely and effectively takes training and experience. Applying pesticides improperly can result in risks to one's health, food safety, and environment. From a regulatory perspective, pesticides are classified as either General Use Pesticides (GUP) or Restricted Use Pesticides (RUP). General Use Pesticides can be purchased and used by the general public without training or certification, Restricted Use Pesticides can only be purchased and used by pesticide applicators that have completed training and are certified by the state of Kentucky. Some herbicides, dicamba and paraquat, require additional training and certifications.



There are two types of pesticide certifications in Kentucky, private applicator certification and commercial and non-commercial applicator certification. **Private applicator certification** is for persons using Restricted Use Pesticides for purposes of producing any agricultural commodity on property owned or rented by him/her or an employer, or to the lands of a farmer-neighbor, if applied without compensation other than trading of personal services between producers of agricultural commodities. **Certified commercial applicators** may use or supervise the use of any pesticide which is classified Restricted Use for any purpose or on any property other than as provided under the definition of private applicator. Noncommercial applicator means any individual employed by golf courses,

municipal corporations, public utilities, or other governmental agencies making applications of pesticides to lands owned, occupied, or managed by his or her employer. There are 21 categories of commercial applicators in Kentucky.

The Kentucky Department of Agriculture also clarified that an individual making **any** pesticide application to an agricultural commodity must be a certified pesticide applicator. This is where there is some confusion: producers often think certification applies only to restricted-use products, when it applies to any and all pesticide applications to agricultural commodities. Certification can be through private applicator or commercial certification.

Persons needing to become commercial and noncommercial pesticide applicators should review general core and category-specific study materials available on the UK Pesticide Safety Education Program (PSEP) website (<https://entomology.ca.uky.edu/uk-pesticide-safety-education-program-psep>). When ready, they need to schedule a time that they can be tested through the Kentucky Department of Agriculture website: (<https://www.kyagr-apps.com/AgExternal/Security/Account/Registration>). With Covid-19 restrictions, applicators must preregister for testing. These certifications last for 3 years and applicators must complete 12 hours of approved continuing education to be eligible to renew their certification.

Private applicators are trained and certified through their county Cooperative Extension Service office. Unlike commercial applicators, there is no mandatory test, instead they attend training classes every three years. This spring, because of covid-19 restrictions, private applicator certifications will be offered using several methods:

- Online-training classes through their county extension office
- Small classes using social distancing if permitted by local health departments
- An alternative private applicator test
- Online training for first-time private applicators (<https://entomology.ca.uky.edu/content/psep-covid-19-private-applicator-training-plan>)

Dicamba-Specific Training

Herbicides containing dicamba that are labeled for use in dicamba tolerant soybean also require dicamba-specific training before they can be used (Xtendimax; Engenia; and Tavium). These products can only be applied by certified applicators that have completed dicamba-specific training. In Kentucky, the approved trainings are offered through the manufacturers of these products through online modules, webinars and meetings. Dicamba-specific training must be done each year. Online modules, webinar schedules, and meeting schedules are available at the following manufacture websites:

- Bayer
(<https://www.roundupreadyxtend.com/stewardship/Pages/default.aspx>)
- BASF
(<https://www.engeniaherbicide.com/training.html>)
- Syngenta
(<https://www.syngenta-us.com/herbicides/tavium-application-stewardship>)

Applicators who have received their annual dicamba training can apply all three labeled products, regardless of which specific registrant training they participated in.

Paraquat-Specific Training

Persons purchasing or using pesticides containing paraquat must have paraquat specific training and certification in addition to being a certified private or commercial applicator. This is a new requirement and the labeling has changed. However, pesticide applicators may continue to use existing stocks according to the directions on the label of the product in their possession. Paraquat-specific training is available online through the EPA and is valid for 3 years (<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-worker-safety/paraquat-dichloride-training-certified-applicators>).