



MDA Pesticide Training Newsletter January 2026

The latest pesticide news, announcements, and training opportunities . . .

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Communication with the Montana Department of Agriculture – Who to Call?

Phone Tree Main Line: (406) 444-4900

Scan the QR code for contacts

- ▶ **License Renewal and Questions**
 - Primary: Kyra Allison-Wright, (406) 444-3691
 - Secondary: Nancy Edwards, (406) 444-9421
- ▶ **MDA Specific Training - Initial Core, Recertification Training, Training Registration**
 - Primary: Beth Thomas, (406) 444-3732
 - Secondary: Matt Deaton, (406) 444-3676
- ▶ **Training Credits, Continuing Education**
 - Primary: Lori Leaf, (406) 444-5512
 - Secondary: Beth Thomas, (406) 444-3732
- ▶ **Course Approvals, Attendance Reporting**
 - Primary: Lori Leaf, (406) 444-5512
 - Secondary: Matt Deaton, (406) 444-3676
- ▶ **Help Finding a License Number**
 - Primary: Kyra Allison-Wright, (406) 444-3691
 - Secondary: Lori Leaf, (406) 444-5512
- ▶ **Trouble Accessing Pesticide Account**
 - Primary: Kyra Allison-Wright, (406) 444-3691
 - Secondary: Nancy Edwards, (406) 444-5471
- ▶ **Pesticide Manual Purchases**
 - Primary: Beth Thomas, (406) 444-3732
 - Secondary: Matt Deaton, (406) 444-3676
- ▶ **Pesticide Product Registration**
 - Primary: Nancy Edwards, (406) 444-5471
 - Secondary: Kay Deskins, (406) 444-0510



Modernizing Montana’s Pesticide Programs: New Database Launch

The Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) has officially migrated to a new database system for its pesticide programs. Launched at the end of October—just ahead of renewal season—the new system integrates pesticide enforcement, licensing, certification, and training programs into one modern platform.

Previously, these programs were managed through the MT Plants database. The new database is hosted on the Accela Civic Platform, which offers improved functionality for customers managing their licenses and renewals online. Licensees can choose to [create an online account](#) to renew electronically through Accela or continue using the paper renewal process. While every new system brings a few “bumps in the road,” MDA continues to work closely with developers to address issues as they arise. We appreciate your patience and understanding as we fine-tune this new system.

For applicators searching for continuing education opportunities, the [MDA Pesticide Training and Recertification](#) webpage remains your best resource. The course search tool may look a little different, but it offers the same functionality as before. You can also check your continuing education credits or look up your license number through the updated links provided on our training and licensing webpages.

As part of this transition, applicators will notice updated classification numbers on their 2026 license cards. MDA has revised its numbering system for pesticide certification categories to better align with those found in many other states. These updates will strengthen reciprocity between states and help improve consistency in pesticide licensing nationwide. These changes to classification numbers or titles will not affect your existing certifications or credit status during the transition period.

MDA remains committed to reducing disruption for pesticide businesses and licensees as we move forward with these upgrades. The Department appreciates the cooperation of Montana’s pesticide community as we implement these important improvements to enhance efficiency, accessibility, and alignment with national standards.

Who to Call:

Pesticide Licensing

(406) 444-3691

PestLicensing@mt.gov

Continuing Education Courses & Credits

(406) 444-5512

Lori.Leaf@mt.gov

Pesticide Study Manuals

(406) 444-3732

Beth.Thomas@mt.gov

MDA In-Person Initial Core Trainings

Overview: The Montana Department of Agriculture is hosting a three-day training course designed for those interested in becoming a commercial, non-commercial, government or special utility applicator and/or a pesticide dealer. The training is designed to prepare participants for the National Core Exam, provide hands-on-exercises, discuss licensing requirements, and learn about available resources. It is intended to provide training for initial certification only.*

The National Core Exam will be proctored on the 3rd day of the training. Testing is optional, but highly recommended. Reviewing the core manual and passing the subsequent exam with at least an 80% score will allow individuals to obtain their dealers license and is the first step to obtaining a commercial, non-commercial, or government, or special utility applicator license. To obtain an applicator license, individuals must also pass at least one category specific exam relating to the sites in which they will be working. If you are interested in taking a category specific exam at the conclusion of the Core Training, please contact Beth ahead of time. **

Cost: The training cost is \$75 and includes the core manual. Upon registration, the core manual and an agenda will be mailed to participants.

Times: Training at each location will begin at 8AM daily and end at 5PM the first two days and around noon on the 3rd day.

*Recertification credits will NOT be available for attendance at these trainings.

**For a list of category classifications use these links: [Commercial Applicators](#) or [Government Applicators](#)

There is a limit of 50 participants at each location. For more information, please call 406-444-3732.

You can register using this [LINK](#).

Dates and Locations:

March 4 – 6, 2026 – Belgrade

Venue: Holiday Inn Express

Address: 309 West Madison Avenue, Belgrade, MT 59714

Phone: (406) 388-7100

March 18 – 20, 2026 – Billings

Venue: Hampton Inn Billings

Address: 5110 Southgate Drive, Billings, MT 59101

Phone: (406) 248-4949

April 1 – 3, 2026 – Missoula

Venue: Best Western Plus Grant Creek Inn

Address: 5280 Grant Creek Road, Missoula, MT 59808

Phone: (406) 543-0700

April 15 – 17, 2026 – Great Falls

Venue: Great Falls College MSU

Address: 2100 16th Avenue South, Great Falls, MT 59405

Phone: (406) 771-4300



Images courtesy Beth Thomas

License RENEWAL vs. License RECERTIFICATION

➤ **Commercial, Government, Dealers, Special Utility, and Non-government Applicators**

RENEWAL

- Renewals must be completed annually
- Notifications occur in November
- Fees
 - Commercial = \$85
 - Government = \$70
 - Operators = \$25 (first 2), \$10 for additional operators added

RECERTIFICATION

Applicators with this license type must earn 12 CEC's (**C**ontinuing **E**ducation **C**redits) for their licensed category(s) during the 4-year cycle. Please note, a maximum of 6 CEC's may be acquired via online, self-paced training. An applicator who does not obtain the required 12 CEC's for the expiring category by the end of the four-year cycle, is required to retake and pass the category exam. The start and end date, category, and category number, within each cycle are listed below.

From 1/1/2023 to 12/31/2026

- (5) Aquatic Pest
- (0) Dealer
- (2) Forest Pest
- (9) Non-Soil Fumigation
- (3) Ornamental and Turf
- (19) Piscicide
- (14) Special Utility
- (11) Wood Product Pest Control

From 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2027

- (10) Demonstration & Research
- (7) Industrial, Institutional, Structural, and Health Related
- (15) School Pest Control
- (4) Seed Treatment

From 1/1/2025 to 12/31/2028

- (18) Aerial
- (16) Agricultural Animal Pest
- (1) Agricultural Plant Pest
- (20) Mosquito Abatement
- 24-26) Other (Sewer Treatment, Biocides, and Animal Contraceptives)
- (8) Public Health Pest

From 1/1/2026 to 12/31/2029

- (17) Agricultural Vertebrate Pest
- (13) Sodium Cyanide (M-44)
- (21) Regulatory Predator
- (22) Regulatory Rodent
- (23) Regulatory Weed
- (6) Right-of-Way, Rangeland, Pasture, and Non-crop Pest

➤ **Private Applicators**

Renewal and Recertification

- Five-year cycle
- Applicators must obtain 6 CEC's during
- Fee is \$60 (\$12/year, but paid at the time of renewal and recertification)

For More information, visit: <https://agr.mt.gov/Pesticide-License-Program>

Staying Safe While Working in the Highway Rights of Way

Jason Allen, MDT Noxious Weed Coordinator

As Montana's population grows, increased demands on transportation infrastructure and public utilities are reshaping conditions along the state's roadways. For those of us working in the highway right of way (ROW), higher traffic volumes and speed limits have contributed to a more hazardous work environment, making safety vigilance even more important.

When working in the ROW, it is essential that you keep yourself visible. This includes using top lights, marker lights, and hazard lights on your equipment, Ansi Class II or III reflective clothing to increase your personal visibility, and Proper Work Zone set up. By giving advanced warnings, motorists have ample time to react, regardless of how far away from the travel lanes you are. Remember these rules:

- Assume that everyone traveling could be under the influence (alcohol/drugs) or distracted (electronics/eating/scenery).
- Always be aware of your surroundings and expect the unexpected.
- Always have an escape route planned. Never assume you are safe in good weather conditions or behind a barrier such as a fence or guardrail.
- Never take short cuts, especially pertaining to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and wearing your seat belt (every person, every trip, every time).



The ROW workspace is not getting easier to navigate, so it is critical to prioritize safety. Additionally, as winter approaches, plan for severe driving conditions. Always know before you go, and check 511mt.net or the MDT 511 mobile app.

Don't Crowd the Plow

When driving on severe road conditions, always watch for snowplows working. Give at least 5 car lengths of spacing between you and the plow and never drive into a snow cloud. Remember, the number one goal is for everyone to arrive at their destination safely!



(Image courtesy MDT)

For those of you who do not work in the ROW, please be aware and respectful of those working in these hazardous environments.

Mapping in the Noxious Weed World

Greta Dige, Noxious Weed Trust Fund Grant Coordinator

We interact with maps a lot in our lives from checking the road reports for winter travel to planning a trip or a fun adventure in the wild areas of Montana. So, we are familiar with maps, now let's learn how mapping can be helpful in the weed world.

Mapping weeds is a powerful tool when added to one's weed management program. The type of information a map can show is the weed and treatment locations, as well as a log of where you have been. The data collected can be compared from year to year to provide a detailed picture of what is going on such as decrease in size of infestations weeds, how much ground is covered to find/treat them, as well as any trends that may appear like where they came from or how they were introduced and maybe why they are spreading. Using this tool can help tell one's story by making the information sharable with others whether other farm hands as a to do list, contractors, commissioners, or even for potential grant applications.

To start mapping, you just need a map. It can be paper or digital; select what you're comfortable using. When starting to map for the first time determine the purpose for mapping. Setting a purpose will help guide you and keep you from getting overwhelmed. The purpose most likely will change depending on specific species whether it is common and widespread to sparse or very few plants. For example, if mapping a widespread and common species like spotted knapweed, a person could lump several areas together. However, if there is a weed species new to the area or has little to no presence one would want to map each location so they can be found and treated. As you may not be the only one mapping or reading the map write the information done so all are on the same page and the information is interrupted correctly.

Let's talk about what is available, both free and paid options. Free to print or web applications: For paper maps go to free mapping services such as [Google Maps](#), [Montana Natural Heritage Program's Map Viewer](#), [USDA's Web Soil Survey](#) to print your own. If computers are not your thing, visit local libraries, county weed districts, extension offices, or reach out to the AgCorps Mapping and Monitoring Specialist at nwft@mt.gov to print one for you.

Paid Programs/Apps: There are a LOT of mapping applications out there ranging in cost from a few dollars per month to thousands of dollars per year. Look at what your options are and find the best one for what you want to be able to do and your skill level. Paid programs are but not limited to Google Earth, various Onx apps, Trailforks, Avenza, QGIS, ESRI. There even some companies that make spray loggers which are connected to spray equipment and track anytime the equipment is used. While all will work, if choosing a paid mapping application, find what best fits you, your budget, and your needs.

Mapping Tips:

- Keep the area you map to a small so as not to get overwhelmed. Enough small pieces put together will complete the picture
- Only map about 2-3 species at a time especially while beginning
- Write down what your purpose(s) for mapping and include what colors and/or symbols mean
- Use the map type what is comfortable to you whether paper or an app
- Be accurate, consistent, and efficient

To learn more about mapping check out the Noxious Weeds Program's [Mapping and Mointoring resources page](#).

Resources Spotlight

This resource spotlight will provide resources for strategies to effectively communicate with the public.

- **Questions from the public - IS IT SAFE?** This is a valid and commonly asked question and can be interpreted to mean different things. As a pest control professional, people trust you with their safety and giving clients an accurate information helps build trust and your reputation. This document will give you some strategies and phrases to help respond in a thoughtful and thorough way. If you work with a team of people, this document is also a valuable resource to have discussions with and to make sure all team members are knowledgeable about how to respond. Please click [HERE](#) to view a factsheet from the National Pesticide Information Center, which will give you some phrases to use to reframe the question, “Is it Safe?”



Image courtesy NPIC

- **Key Messages**

This resource from Corteva will provide simple statements and facts used to answer questions as consistently and directly as possible. Information on this site will help you with information regarding herbicide safety, EPA requirements with testing and toxicity, herbicides vs. mechanical control methods, and how to effectively inform the public about the benefits of vegetation management. There are also short videos which illustrate ways to use key messages to effectively inform the public about vegetation management.

In addition, recommended word choices include:

AVOID:

Pesticide
Poison or brush killer
Spray right-of-way
Spray Trees

REPLACE WITH:

Product/mixture
Selective treatment
Targeting Application
Treat invasive brush

- **Notify Your Neighbor Resource Guide**

This Resource guide, courtesy of Corteva, contains strategies, techniques and key messages to provide a basis to generate effective conversations with clients, landowners, and the general public. Included topics include electric utilities, pipelines, roadways, and plant and animal community response to long-term vegetation management practices on rights-of way. Videos included addressing how to handle difficult situations with effective responses, addressing landowner concerns with effective responses, effective homeowner notification, and effective use of key messages.

MDA Pesticide Training Staff Contacts

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