An aerial photograph of a vast agricultural field, likely a flower field, showing rows of plants in various colors including red, pink, and green. A small tractor is visible in the upper right quadrant of the field. A large, white, rounded rectangular graphic is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the main title and subtitle.

# **Agricultural Pest Control Adviser (PCA)**

**California Department of Pesticide Regulation  
Licensing and Certification Program**

# **In This Presentation We Will Discuss**

PCA Background

Importance of PCAs

How to Qualify for a PCA License

How to Check if Your Courses are DPR Approved

How to Submit PCA Courses for DPR Approval

What Happens After Passing the PCA Exams

# PCA Background

- What is a PCA?
- What is Agricultural Use?





# What is a PCA?

A Pest Control Adviser (PCA) is any person who:

- *Offers recommendations on any agricultural use of pesticides,*
  - *Holds himself/herself as an authority on any agricultural use, or*
  - *Solicits services or sales for any agricultural use*
- 
- PCAs specialize in pest management and recommend use of pesticides and other alternatives.
  - PCAs provide written recommendations on agricultural use.

# What is “Agricultural Use”?

- The use of any pesticide, method, or device to control pests or
- The use of any pesticide for regulating plant growth or defoliation of plants
- It excludes the sale or use of pesticides in properly labeled packages or containers that are intended for:
  - Home use
  - Industrial or Instructional use
  - Structural pest control
  - Controlling pests and diseases of animals under the written prescription of a veterinarian
  - Local districts or public agencies operating under a cooperative agreement with the State Department of Health Services



# Importance of PCAs in the Agricultural Field

- Why PCAs are Necessary
- PCA Career Opportunities



# Why are PCAs Necessary?



PCAs provide important educational information about agricultural pesticide products and their uses



PCAs are focused and very knowledgeable in at least one area of pest management



PCAs meet the California Environment Quality Act (CEQA) requirement to ensure use of pesticides is the best alternative based on site specifics

# PCA Career Opportunities

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- **Working for Hire**

- Most PCAs are self employed and work for growers

- **Working for Industry**

- Agricultural companies
- Pest Control Dealer companies

- **Working for Government**

- County
- State
- Federal

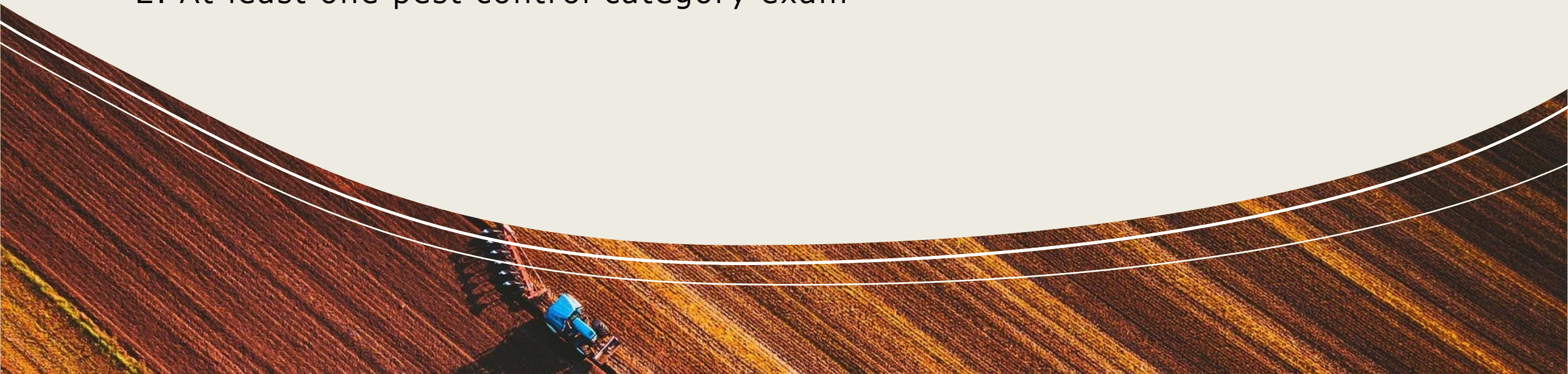
# How to Qualify for a License

- PCA License Requirements
- PCA License Categories
- Minimum Education Requirements
- Core Areas of Study



# PCA License Requirements

- The PCA license has specific minimum educational and/or technical experience requirements.
- DPR extensively reviews and approves PCA applications to ensure minimum requirements have been met prior to individuals taking the examination.
- Once approved, the applicant must pass:
  1. Laws, Regulations and Basic Principles exam
  2. At least one pest control category exam



# PCA License Categories

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- PCAs must pass **at least one** of the category exams and must be licensed in categories in which they will be making recommendations
- Categories include:
  - A. Insects, Mites, and Other Invertebrates
  - B. Plant Pathogens
  - C. Nematodes
  - D. Vertebrates
  - E. Weeds
  - F. Defoliation
  - G. Plant Growth Regulators

# PCA Minimum Education Requirements (3 CCR 6550)

1

Option #1: Bachelor's Degree + Educational requirements needed

2

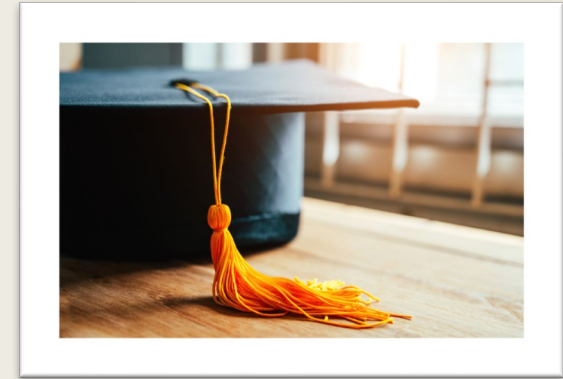
Option #2: Ph.D. (No educational requirements or technical experience needed)

3

Option #3: No Degree + Educational requirements and technical experience needed

# Option #1: Bachelor's Degree

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- Bachelor's Degree in:
  - Agricultural Science
  - Biological Sciences
  - Natural Sciences
  - Pest Management

## + Educational Requirements

- 42 semester or 63 quarter units in core course areas
- 2.0 GPA or greater for courses used on the PCA minimum requirements form
- Work experience may be used in place of classes for a total of 9 semester or 13.5 quarter units

# Option #2: Doctoral Degree

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- Ph.D. in:
  - Agricultural Science
  - Biological Sciences
  - Natural Sciences
  - Pest Management

No Specific Course Requirements

# Option #3: No Degree

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- No degree, or
- No degree in an accepted area of study

## + Educational Requirements

- 42 semester or 63 quarter units in core course areas
- 2.0 GPA or greater for courses used on the PCA minimum requirements form

## + 24 months of combined Technical Experience



**Physical and Biological Sciences** (12 semester units or 18 quarter units)



**Crop Health** (9 semester units or 13.5 quarter units)



**Pest Management Systems and Methods** (6 semester units or 9 quarter units) + one Integrated Pest Management course



**Production Systems** (6 semester units or 9 quarter units)



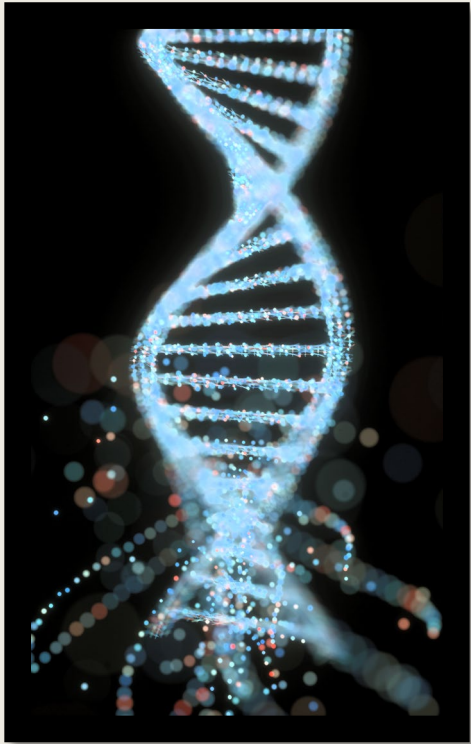
**Electives** (9 semester units or 13.5 quarter units)

# Core Course Areas

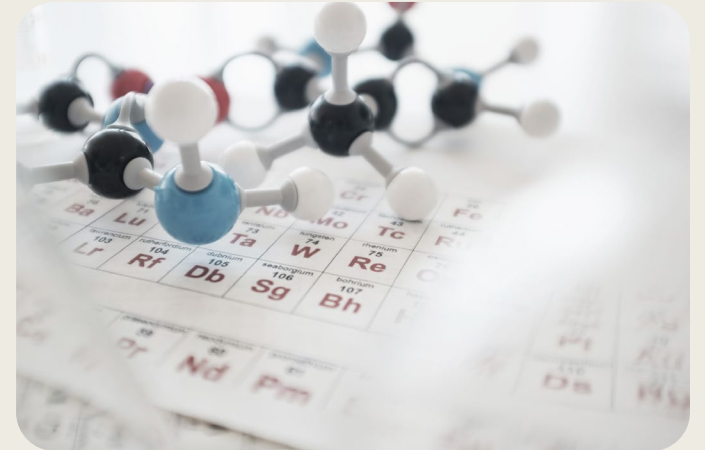
**42 Semester or 63 Quarter Units are required for Option #1 and Option #3**

# Physical and Biological Sciences

12 Semester / 18  
Quarter Units



- Includes courses such as:
  - Inorganic chemistry
  - Biochemistry
  - Plant Biology/Botany
  - Ecology
  - Biology
  - Genetics
  - Plant Physiology
  - Zoology



# Crop Health

9 Semester / 13.5  
Quarter Units

- Includes courses such as:
  - Plant Pathology
  - Economic Entomology
  - Soils
  - Irrigation
  - Weed/Weed Science
  - Vegetation Management
  - Plant Nutrition

\*Non-Traditional Courses



# Pest Management Systems and Methods

6 Semester / 9  
Quarter Units



- Includes courses such as:
  - Plant Pathology
  - Entomology
  - Weed Science
  - Biological Control
  - Pesticides
  - Alternate Cropping Systems

\*Non-traditional courses

\*\*Work Experience



**Requirement:** One course emphasizing Integrated Pest Management (IPM) principles

# Production Systems

6 Semester / 9  
Quarter Units



- Includes courses such as:
    - Horticulture
    - Viticulture
    - Forestry
    - Agronomy
    - Crop Production
    - Vegetable or Fruit Science
    - Animal Production, Reproduction, Nutrition
- \*Non-traditional courses
- \*\*Work Experience



# Electives

9 Semester / 13.5

Quarter Units

- Includes any courses listed in:

- Crop Health
- Pest Management Systems and Methods
- Production Systems

\***Non-traditional** courses may be used if focused on Crop Health, Pest Management Systems and Methods, or Production Systems

\*\***Work Experience** may only be used if focused on Pest Management Systems and Methods or Production Systems



# \*Non-Traditional Courses

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- May receive 3 semester/4.5 quarter units for Crop Health, Pest Management Systems and Methods, or Production Systems
- Documentation Required:
  - Course description, syllabus, or other course documentation from an instructor that shows course content
  - Justification of course category
- Courses include:
  - Senior Project
  - Internship
  - Thesis
  - Cooperative Work Experience
  - Independent Study
  - Enterprise Project
  - Dissertation

# \*\*Work Experience

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- 3 semester or 4.5 quarter units may be approved for 12 consecutive months of fulltime work experience in the qualifying core course areas:
  - Pest Management Systems and Methods
  - Production Systems
  - Electives
- 12 months of full-time work experience can only be used once in each qualifying category. Work experience cannot replace all core courses.
- Applicants can use a total of 36 months of fulltime work experience to earn a total of 9 semester units or 13.5 quarter units for all three categories.
- Work Experience may **NOT** be used in Physical and Biological Sciences or Crop Health categories.

# Technical Experience (Option #3)

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- **24 months technical experience working:**
  - For a licensed PCA
  - For a pest management specialist (farm adviser, commercial/private applicator, or dealer)
  - As a field sweeper, field checker, or scout
  - In field or lab research relating to pest control
  - In agricultural pest control activities for a federal, state, or county entity
  - As a QAL employed by a licensed pest control business
  - As a farm operator for agricultural pest control
  - As a certified Crop Adviser from American Society of Agronomy (ASA)
- **Up to 12 months of the following technical experience can be used:**
  - Qualified applicator licensee in category B or K for a licensed pest control business
  - Structural pest control operator or field representative for a registered structural pest control company

# The Difference Between Work Experience and Technical Experience

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## WORK EXPERIENCE

- Used to replace a course in a core category
- Must be 12 consecutive months of relevant, full-time work to earn credit
- Requires documentation such as a letter from the employer/supervisor outlining:
  - Job duties (relating to Pest Management / Production Systems)
  - Approximate hours per week
  - Length of employment
  - Contact information from the person writing the letter

## TECHNICAL EXPERIENCE

- Required for Option #3
- Can be combined with other experiences (at least 24 months)
- Requires documentation such as a letter from the employer/supervisor outlining:
  - Relevant work experience/job duties according to 3 CCR 6550
  - Approximate hours per week
  - Length of employment
  - Contact information from the person writing the letter

A hand holding a blue pen over an open notebook, with a laptop in the background. The scene is set on a dark desk. The hand is positioned over the notebook, and the pen is held in a writing position. The laptop is open and visible in the background, slightly out of focus. The overall lighting is soft and focused on the hand and notebook.

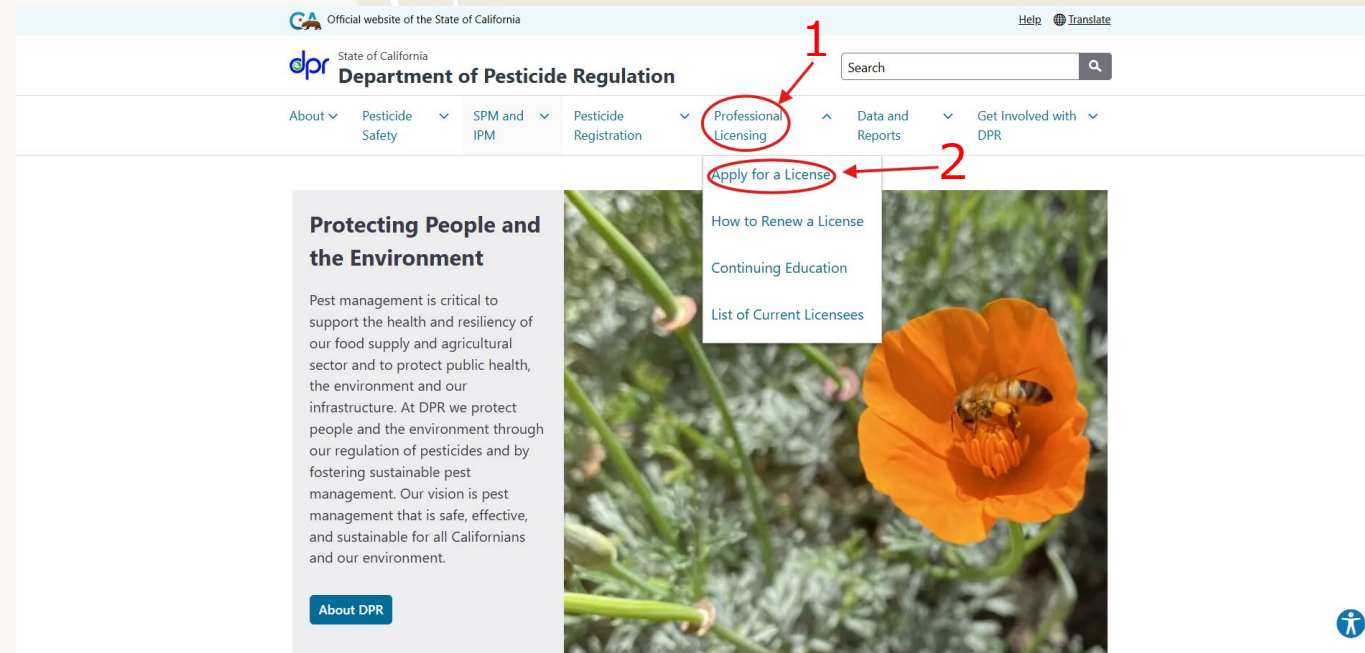
# How to Check PCA Courses for DPR Approval

- Where to find Approved Courses on the DPR Website
- Approved PCA Course List

# Where to Find Approved PCA Courses



- Scan the QR code to direct to the list of approved PCA courses or visit the DPR website at [www.cdpr.ca.gov](http://www.cdpr.ca.gov). If navigating to the website:
- Open the “Professional Licensing” tab at the top of the page
- Click on “Apply for a License”
- Scroll down to the “Pest Control Adviser Education Requirements” section
- Click on the “List of Approved PCA Courses” button



## Pest Control Adviser Education Requirements

These Approved Courses were evaluated and meet the education requirements of California Code of Regulations Section 6550.

[List of Approved PCA Courses](#)



If you are a first time PCA applicant or university or college staff member and have questions about the PCA application process, minimum education course requirements or how to get a course approved by DPR, please contact us at: [PCAmail@cdpr.ca.gov](mailto:PCAmail@cdpr.ca.gov).

# Approved PCA Courses List

- Not all colleges are listed on DPR's web page
- Community colleges are listed by **district** not under each individual college
- If you are unsure as to which district your college is in, please refer to:
  - California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office website

## Approved Pest Control Adviser (PCA) Courses

### On this Page

[Resources for Students and College Professors](#)

[Sign Up for Email Updates](#)

These Approved Courses were evaluated and meet the education requirements of California Code of Regulations Section 6550.

Below are the Department of Pesticide Regulation's (DPR) list of college courses that are currently approved to meet the PCA minimum education requirements.

Course Title

School

Core Category

Select a core category

Submit



# Out-of-State Colleges

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- Only **California colleges** are listed on the PCA Approved Course List
- If a school is not found on the approved list, please use the available list as reference when completing the PCA minimum requirements form to determine where your courses can be applied

# How to Submit PCA Courses for DPR Approval

- Review courses before applying
- Process to submit courses
- PCA Application Packet







# PCA Application Packet



Scan the QR  
code for the  
PCA Application  
Packet

- When filling out, please include the following:
  - Applicant information (such as, First/Last name, D.O.B., Mailing Address, etc.)
  - Exams that you would like take and appropriate fees (new applicant, exam fees)
    - Exams are computer based at multiple sites throughout the state
    - Recommended to complete no more than 1-2 exams during each session
  - Examination Schedule (**PLEASE LEAVE BLANK**)
  - Any reasonable accommodation if applicable
  - Any disciplinary action documentation taken against the applicant if applicable
  - Applicant signature

- Include all of the following materials for the PCA application packet and mail to DPR:
  - Exams you want to take and appropriate fees
  - Completed minimum requirements form
  - **Official** transcripts for ALL courses used on PCA minimum requirements form (PR-PML-085)
    - *Hardcopies must be sealed and unopened and included with application*
    - *Emailed copies must be submitted from a designated college or transcript service*
  - Any work experience documentation (letter) if applicable
  - Any course approval documentation (course approval forms, emails, etc.)
  - **Copy of Official Government ID (drivers license) showing you are 18+ years of age**
    - *As of January 1, 2024, a minimum age of 18 years old must be met prior to admission to examinations. You must submit a copy of valid government-issued documentation*

# PCA Application Packet Materials

## Mailing Address:

Department of Pesticide  
Regulation

Attn: Cashier MS-4A

PO Box 4015

Sacramento, CA 95812-4015

# What Happens After Passing the PCA Exams

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- The license becomes valid once it is posted on the Valid License List on the DPR website. The “Valid License List” is updated daily.
- Important renewal information with the license will be mailed to the address provided on the application.
- DPR license and certificate cycles are valid for two years. Be aware when your license is due for renewal.
- Register with the County Agricultural Commissioners in the county listed on the application and each county where recommendations are made.



Scan QR code to view the current valid license list!



**For More Information About the PCA License, Please Visit  
Our Website:**

<http://www.cdpr.ca.gov/docs/license/adviser.htm>

Or email us at:

[PCAMail@cdpr.ca.gov](mailto:PCAMail@cdpr.ca.gov)