

Tulare County Ag News

2023 Summer Edition



Future Farmers of America



Even though I am 60 years old now I can still remember the “Good Old Days” back in High School when I participated in a local chapter of the Future Farmers of America (FFA). I enjoyed being a part of this group because I wasn’t into sports that much. Dad kept me busy on the ranch after school, homework, and the chores were completed, but we did spend some good family time hunting and fishing from time to time. Anyway, In FFA we were able to compete against other chapters and do a little traveling to attend the different meets as far away as the coast. Coming from farm families, my friends and co-competitors were already aware of how to properly prune a deciduous tree or identify an insect pest, for example. That didn’t stop us from studying more and gaining additional insights from our instructor and others from the industry that came to share their knowledge with us. Being a member of this group helped me grow into the person I am now, and it helped me to understand the importance of reaching out to our youth with a helping hand.

FFA was the organization that I received guidance from but there were many others, not to mention our school programs that have agricultural classes and events of every kind. The California Association of Pest Control Advisors (CAPCA) is well known for its Plant Doctor program bringing agriculture into the classroom. Our Farm Bureau has a similar program(s) too. We are what I and others consider the leading agricultural county in the state, and we should be exposing our children and youth to agriculture and agribusiness as well. I am not suggesting we forsake other types of career training, but agriculturally related programs and training should be right at the top. Ultimately, we need to give a little back.

I remember fondly those early days helping with our church group called AWANA, **Approved Workman Are Not Ashamed** (*Of the Gospel of Christ*). From there my wife and I supported our kids and their friends through all sorts of different sports and clubs. Now that I am in the Agricultural Commissioner’s Office, I have had many opportunities to assist our local Farm Bureau youth programs too. I have even encouraged my managers to do the same in the community. Many times, asking them to help with career fairs and other similar activities. Each time they come back with a good feeling in their hearts, knowing they helped others along their journey called life.

I have strayed a bit from my title comments about Future Farmers of America, but I think you understand. Our children are our number one investment, agriculture (Farming/Ranching...) are right up there too and we need to do everything we can to protect and support them both. Support your kids, grandkids, and those of your community any way possible and support agriculture by at least exposing the kids to what it means. Expose them to 4H clubs, FFA, or any other clubs that will strengthen them and our community at the same time. By doing this we will assure them of a future and the option of an agriculturally based future at that. — Tom Tucker Tulare County Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer of Weights and Measures

High Risk Inspections



For me personally, it's always exciting to receive a package in the mail. The excitement of knowing you just bought something, and the package is on its way. Do you ever stop and think about the number of Packages you personally may send or receive on a weekly or monthly basis. Just imagine how many packages are sent throughout the world. Each year billions of packages are sent through FedEx and UPS. People are constantly shipping some type of product. The mass majority of what type of products that are being sent around the world is just crazy, if you really stop and think about it. So what does shipping packages with FedEx and UPS have to do with the Agricultural Commissioner's office?

Tulare County has a High-Risk Program which allows Agricultural & Standards Inspectors to monitor shipments of packages that enter the FedEx and UPS locations. An Inspector will inspect packages at both FedEx and UPS locations each day. The inspectors check for packages that may contain plant products that are entering the State of California. The inspectors will open packages and inspect them. If they find a package with plant products, the inspector will put the package on hold to be able to inspect it further. The inspector will check that the plant material is free from pests. As well as checking that the shipment has the required documentation.

Depending on where the package is coming from, depends on what type of documentation it is required to have to enter California. If the shipment is inspected and found that it contains pests, the pest will be collected, and it will be officially identified. Depending on what type of pest is present then the package may be taken and destroyed. The same process goes for not having required paperwork along with the shipment.

Shipments from around the world enter Tulare County through these various ground and air parcel carries. These locations are pathways for the possibility of many invasive pests entering the State and Tulare County. This program allows our Agricultural Inspectors to monitor the possibility of invasive pests that could enter the state and into Tulare County.

Next time you order some type of product or ship a product to someone, stop and think about how Agricultural Inspectors are possibly inspecting that very package. — Nicole Motley; Deputy Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer of Weights & Measures (Pest Exclusion & Standardization Division)



Weights and Measures/Food Quality

Greetings and Salutations! My name is Jonathan Bixler, and I am the newly appointed Deputy Sealer of Weights and Measures. I have been with Tulare County for 5 ½ years and have a total of 15 years of public service at the county level. I worked as a Biologist/Standards Specialist with the San Mateo County Ag. Commissioner's Office starting in 2007. I worked in the Exclusion, Standards, and Weights and Measures divisions of the department for a total of 9 years. I moved back to my hometown of Tulare in 2016 and took a position with Tulare County as the Deputy Agricultural Commissioner of the Exclusion and Standards Division. After 3 years in that capacity, I was placed in charge of the Pest Detection, Pest Management, and Crop Statistics Division for another 2 years. As Deputy Sealer I oversee making sure all devices that are used for a service or charge are both precise and accurate. We promote equity in the marketplace, preventing unfair business practices, and ensuring the public receives a fair value and quantity for goods. The Weights and Measures division consists of Weighing devices, Measuring devices, Weighmasters, and the Fuels, Lubricants, and Automotive Products Program (FLAPP). Weighing Devices include Computing scales, Counter scales, Dormant scales, Portable Platform scales, Hanging scales, Livestock scales, Prescription/Jewelry scales, and Vehicle scales. Measuring devices include Electric submeters, Fabric/Cordage/Wire meters, Propane Tank fillers, Retail Motor Fuel meters (Gas Pumps), Taximeters, Vapor submeters (Natural Gas), and Water submeters. The submeters mentioned are normally only found in mobile home parks or apartments complexes. Weighmasters are individuals or firms who weigh, measure, or count bulk products and issue certificates of accuracy of the weight, measure, or count. Weighmaster certificates are legal documents used to buy and sell products. In the FLAPP program we perform inspections of service stations, quick lube and oil change shops, and auto service shops for compliance with business and profession codes. For any complaints about any of these devices or programs please don't hesitate to call us at (559) 684-3350.

In addition to Weights and Measures I also oversee the Food Quality programs. These include Certified Farmers' Markets, Organic Certification, Industrial Hemp, and Egg Quality Control. The Certified Farmers' Markets program includes Certified Producer and Farmer's Market registrations, inspections at production sites and Farmer's Markets to verify the origins of commodities, and investigations when violations are present. In the Organic program we perform spot inspections at Producers/Farmers, Packing Houses, Distribution Centers, Wholesalers, Cold Storages, Restaurants, Retailers, and Nurseries. We also help verify organic status by looking up pesticide use reports from growers. Industrial Hemp is cannabis from approved seed cultivars with a THC% less than 0.3%. Industrial Hemp activities include Hemp Grower and Seed Breeder registration, inspections to enforce laws and regulations, collecting samples for THC testing, and investigations when violations are present. In Egg Quality, Producers, wholesalers, and retailers are inspected for compliance with egg laws and regulations, Eggs are examined for defects including cracks, decay, embryos, blood spots, etc., and inspectors are licensed to conduct federal (USDA) compliance inspections to ensure quality of eggs and egg products.

It is my great pleasure to oversee these programs as this work is my passion! I hope to make a difference in this community and make sure that everyone gets fair value and quantity of goods, as well as promoting and ensuring the quality of healthy foods in addition to creating more access to them. -Jonathan Bixler; Deputy Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer of Weights & Measures (Weights & Measures Division)

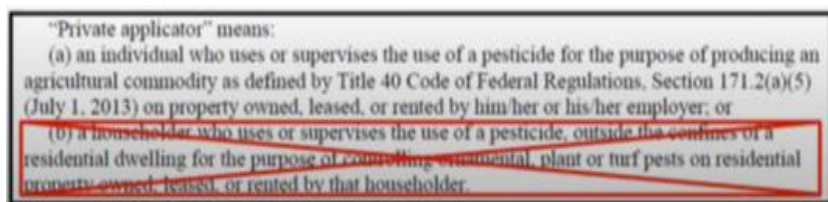
Changes to Private Applicator Certificate Holders



Both new and recertifying applicators need to be aware of changes to California's Private Applicator Certification and Licensing program:

- There is a **NEW Initial Exam** required for all private applicators expiring 12/31/2023 or future dates.
- The new exam is to meet the new competency standards set in the revised Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations Part 171. This exam is already being proctored in our Main office location; 4437 South Laspina St. Suite A Tulare, CA 93274, You do not need to wait until you expire to take this exam.
- All PAC holders must meet the NEW competency standards.
- There will be a Phased-in approach based on PAC holder's last name:
 - January 1, 2024 –PAC w/last names R-Z
 - January 1, 2025 –PAC w/last names A-H
 - January 1, 2026 –PAC w/last names I-Q
- There will also be a **NEW** sub-test requirement for use of fumigants for burrowing vertebrate.
 - This will be known as the **"Burrowing Vertebrate Pest Fumigation Certificate"**. This exam will be available to take July 2023 and will go into effect January 1, 2024, for all PAC holders regardless of the last name.
- If you are a PAC holder who will be applying to obtain the **Burrowing Vertebrate Pest Fumigation Certificate** option, but your existing PAC expires after the implementation date of the proposed regulations (i.e., after January 1, 2024), you are required to take and pass the revised PAC Practical Knowledge Examination, which includes the revised competencies, at or before obtaining the new Private Applicator Burrowing Vertebrate Pest Fumigation Certificate Option.
 - This requirement applies regardless of when your existing PAC expires.
- All Private Applicators who intend to use any other type of fumigant product other than those labeled for the control of burrowing vertebrate pests must obtain a commercial applicator certificate in the appropriate fumigant category(ies).
 - This will be the commercial applicator **Soil Fumigation Category (L)** and/or the **Non-Soil Fumigations Category (M)**. These previously were allowed to be done with a PAC alone.
 - If applicable, this commercial applicator certificate must be obtained by January 1, 2024, to remain in compliance.
- U.S. EPA has requested that DPR align California's private applicator definition with the federal private applicator definition.
- As a result, the definition of "householder" is being removed from the 3 CCR private applicator definition. Upon the effective date of the regulations, individuals who currently conduct "householder" activities under a PAC will be required to obtain a commercial applicator license or certificate with the appropriate category(ies), if they intend to continue "householder" activities.

Marianna Gentert; Deputy Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer of Weights & Measures (Pesticide Use Enforcement Division)



Vertebrate Bait Sales

Many County Agricultural Commissioner's offices, including Tulare County, produce or procure poison bait to facilitate the control of vertebrate pests. These products are priced without the intent of making a profit. We only attempt to recover enough funds to continue the program and provide low-cost pest control options to our agricultural community. Our prices will be increasing beginning on July 1st, 2023 due to the costs of materials going up. These prices are listed in the graphic below, but please take note of the mandated surcharge for research and applicable sales tax depending on location.

The treated grains and treated wax blocks are only available for purchase in 50-pound increments. The gas cartridges may be purchased individually; however we are currently sold out and not expecting more until late 2023 due to a manufacturing change that requires EPA approval. All Diphacinone containing products are "Restricted Use Pesticides" and you must be a certified applicator with either a Restricted Materials Permit or Operator ID to purchase them. Please give us a call with any questions you may have at 559-684-3350. Sam Conant; Deputy Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer of Weights & Measures (Pest Detection, Management, & Crop Statistics Division)

Ag Warehouse – Visalia

14173 Avenue 256, Visalia, CA 93292

Phone: 687-7080

Bait Sales: Monday's 8am-12pm*

Porterville Office

346 N. Porter Rd, Porterville, CA 93257

Phone: 782-6811

Bait Sales: Wednesday's 1pm-2pm

*Bait sales will occur at the Ag Warehouse on **Tuesdays instead when there is a Holiday observed on Monday.**

VERTEBRATE PEST CONTROL MATERIALS			
Diphacinone-treated grain 0.01 -	price/lb	\$	2.20
Diphacinone-treated grain 0.005 -	price/lb	\$	2.00
Diphacinone-treated wax block 0.005 -	price/lb	\$	2.35
Gas Cartridges -	price/each	\$	3.70
(In addition to the above fee, a mandated \$.50 per pound or \$.16 per gas cartridge surcharge for research will be added where allowed by law or regulation, plus applicable sales tax)			

Tulare County **Agricultural Commissioner's Office**



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Office Hours:
Monday – Friday
8:00am to 5:00pm

