

# “Just don’t break the law.”: Virtual Pesticide CEU Classes at the Dawn of COVID

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## Situation

- ◆ The COVID-19 pandemic shut down Florida’s pesticide licensing and testing program.
- ◆ Farmers, ranchers, landscapers, natural resource conservationists, and others found themselves unable to obtain the Continuing Education Units (CEUs) required to maintain their licenses.
- ◆ One major landscaping license requires training before testing, resulting in hiring freezes for those waiting to obtain licenses.

## Methods

- ◆ The Central District Pesticide Training Team, in close concert with the Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services and the UF/IFAS Pesticide Information Office, immediately modified teaching and attendance verification methods to exist within the Zoom videoconferencing platform.
- ◆ Materials were developed to teach students how to use Zoom ahead of the class.
- ◆ Presentations were modified as needed
- ◆ Each class was taught by at least two people: one speaker and one IT coordinator who solved IT issues and monitored the chat for questions.
- ◆ Continual attendance must be verified in order for students to receive CEUs. Attendance verification for each module was solved with a combination of time-limited actions to be performed by attendees. These included pre/post tests and randomly occurring tasks.
- ◆ A host of backup measures were developed to ensure technical difficulties/limitations would not affect attendance verification, including direct contact with the IT coordinator.

## Results

- ◆ 193 people attended virtual pesticide classes April-November 2020
- ◆ 76% attended for license renewal CEUs to maintain employment. 28% reported salary increases.
- ◆ Year-to-year surveys showed no loss of knowledge gain moving to the virtual format.

**Major Pests and Stressors of Ornamental Plants**

UF/IFAS Extension UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

Going virtual not only allowed pesticide applicators to maintain their licenses while offices were closed, but also opened up classes to students throughout the state. Here, a class is given to a company with offices across throughout the FL peninsula.



At a Virtual CEU Day, students learn to match increasing pesticide risks with proportionate PPE .

**Pest ID activity**  
What type of damage could this insect have caused?

Regular communication with students in the form of polls and quizzes verified student participation.

Step 1) 2.7% to decimal  
→ 2.7% = 2.7/100 = .02  
→ .02 × 128 oz/gal  
= 2.56 oz per gal

Step 2) 2.56 oz/gal × 3 gal  
= 7.68 oz

Sometimes there’s no replacement for a whiteboard.

Time	Topic
8:00- 8:20	Welcome, Introductions, & Housekeeping
8:20- 9:10	Laws, Regulations, & Pesticide Safety
9:10- 9:25	BREAK
9:25- 10:35	Weed Classification & Herbicide Technology (hands on weed ID™ 15 minutes)
10:35- 10:50	BREAK
10:50- 11:50	Understanding the Pesticide Label Evaluations & CEUs
11:50- 12:50	LUNCH
12:50- 1:45	Major Pests & Stressors of Ornamental Plants Calculations & Equipment Calibration
1:45- 2:30	
2:30- 2:40	Lawn and Ornamental Information

An image from a class advertisement along with a class schedule. Close work with the Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services ensured that class materials and scheduling remained within legal CEU requirements.