

## **2021 Pesticide Applicator Programming in Wharton County**

**Developed by:**

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### **Relevance**

For the year 2021 Wharton County, Texas has **548** (compared to 572 in 2020; 586 in 2019) pesticide applicators licensed with the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA). Private Pesticide Applicators are required to obtain fifteen (15) CEUs (continued education credits) every five years in order to renew their license. Commercial and Non-Commercial Applicators are required to obtain 5 CEUs every year in order to renew their license. There is a substantial audience and a need for Extension to provide the educational opportunities for these applicators to obtain their CEU credits. In addition, new applicators seek opportunities throughout the year to take the certification course at the Wharton County Extension Office to obtain their license. The Wharton County Row Crops Committee and Western Rice Belt Production Conference Committee identify Continued Education Units (CEUs) as a priority of program planning for Wharton County.

### **Response**

Due to Covid-19 guidelines that were in place in 2021, virtual meetings were held in place of in-person educational programs until guidelines permitted the return of in-person meetings. The Wharton County Row Crops Committee provided for one (1) virtual course in 2021 that offered five (5) CEUs. The committee planned, promoted, and conducted this event based on client need and evaluation results from the 2020 Conference. This 5-CEU Pesticide Recertification Conference is usually held each year at the Wharton County Youth Fairgrounds in Crescent, TX. CEUs were also awarded at the following seminars and workshops scheduled throughout the year: January 20, 2021 Virtual Western Rice Belt Conference; January 21, 2021 Virtual Grain Handlers Conference; January 26, 2021 Virtual Upper Gulf Coast Feed Grain and Cotton Conference; February 11, 2021 Virtual 5-CEU Conference; February/March 2020 Auxin Specific Applicator Training; and at seed meetings and/or field days for: Pioneer Seed@/Kresta Farms, and Krenek Seed Company. CEU credits are also made available to pesticide applicators by viewing a series of Last Chance CEU videos at the Wharton County Extension Office.

The mandatory Certification Training for potential pesticide applicators to obtain their pesticide applicator license was provided by the Wharton County Extension Office throughout the year on an as-needed basis or when requested.

Ag Science Teachers located throughout Texas is another audience of licensed pesticide applicators that County Extension Agent, Corrie Bowen educates. Since 2005 Agent Bowen has facilitated a Pesticide Applicator Certification Workshop and a Pesticide Applicator Recertification Workshop at the Vocational Ag Teachers Association of Texas (VATAT) annual conference. Ag Science teachers must also acquire their required recertification credits, but they often have difficulty attending the recertification course while they are teaching in the classroom. Offering CEUs at their annual conference helps teachers acquire their

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needed recertification credits. 2021 marked Agent Bowen's 17<sup>th</sup> consecutive year cooperating with the VATAT Board of Directors, providing and facilitating their annual pesticide workshops. The 2021 VATAT Pesticide Workshops were held on July 19, 2021 in Corpus Christi, Texas

### Results

Six (6) new applicators attended the Private Pesticide Applicator training and testing sessions offered at the Wharton County Extension Office in the year 2021. The number of Private Applicators completing the certification training at the Wharton Office has declined due to Covid-19, whereas applicators have an option of also completing the training online.

For year 2021 Wharton County awarded a total of twenty-three (23.0) CEUs at group meetings to a total of 684 individuals. It's estimated that due to Covid-19, the number of pesticide applicators reached with recertification credits at group meetings is down only 12% in 2021 from the 779 individuals reached in 2020.

#### February 11, 2021 Virtual 5-CEU Pesticide Recertification Conference

A retrospective-post evaluation instrument was conducted on the day of the 5-CEU Pesticide Recertification Conference. 51 of 98 (52%) completed the evaluation instrument. 34% (17 of 49) report that over the past three years that they have addressed feral hog mitigation/control strategies by applying practices for feral hog management taught at this annual conference.

**74% (37 of 50) report an economic benefit from participating in the 2021 5-CEU Virtual Recertification Conference**

#### **Client Change Level of Understanding: February 11, 2021 5-CEU Pesticide Recertification Conference**

TOPICS	Mean Value BEFORE	Mean Value AFTER	Percent Increase
Bermudagrass Stem Maggot Identification and Control Methods	1.89	3.44	89%

#### July 19, 2021 VATAT Pesticide Workshop

Twenty-three (23) Ag Science Teachers attended the TDA Pesticide Recertification Workshop, which addressed Herbicide Groups and Relevance to Herbicide Resistance, Huisache Ecology and Brush Management, and TDA Pesticide Laws and Regulations. These topics were identified by Ag Teachers at the 2020 VATAT conference workshops. 21 of 23 (91%) completed a retrospective-post Survey. 65% (15 of 23) estimate an economic benefit from participating in this workshop. Participants increased their knowledge of Herbicide Groups and its Relevance to Herbicide Resistance by 50%; and increased their knowledge of Huisach Ecology and Brush Management by 129%. Thirty-six (36) Ag Science Teachers complete the Private Applicator Certification Training.

**Participants of the VATAT Pesticide Recertification Conference Participants reported 11,910 acres managed, and a total anticipated economic benefit to their operations of \$68,125 or \$5.72 per acre**