



Inside Ag *May 7, 2008*

Companies Providing Weed and Pest Control Require Licensing as a Pesticide Applicator



Spring has sprung! Life comes out of hibernation, and the landscape begins to green. Unfortunately weeds and insect pests also begin to thrive, and this is the time when many consumers hire specialists to spray lawns for weeds and trees and shrubs for insects.

The Colorado Pesticide Applicators' Act requires any person or company that applies pesticides for hire, whether they are applying to a structure, lawn, or agricultural area, to be licensed as a commercial applicator.

A pesticide is defined as any substance or mixture of substances intended for preventing, destroying, repelling or mitigating any pest (including weeds and diseases). Examples of pesticides include herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides, among others.

Organic or natural substances that prevent, destroy, repel or mitigate any pest, weed or disease are also considered pesticides. Companies that market themselves as 'green' or providing 'natural' pest control services must also be licensed as a pesticide applicator.

"Every licensed commercial applicator in Colorado has to meet strict testing requirements that are enforced by the Colorado Department of Agriculture," said Laura Pottorff, pesticide applicator coordinator at CDA. "For better environmental and public safety, they must have the necessary training, expertise and experience to apply these chemicals."

A person or company that performs applications for hire without holding the appropriate license may receive a minimum fine of \$1,000 per violation.

In addition to licensing commercial and private applicators, CDA officials conduct routine office inspections to review records of applications, equipment maintenance and storage and disposal of pesticides.

The Department also investigates pesticide application and use complaints. Contact the Colorado Department of Agriculture Pesticide Section at (303) 239-4146 or online at www.colorado.gov/ag/dpi with additional questions, to determine if a landscape maintenance company is licensed, or to file a pesticide misapplication complaint.