



MDA Pesticide Training Newsletter - August 2026

The latest pesticide news, announcements, and training opportunities . . .

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Expiring License Categories

Click [HERE](#) to learn how to check your credits.

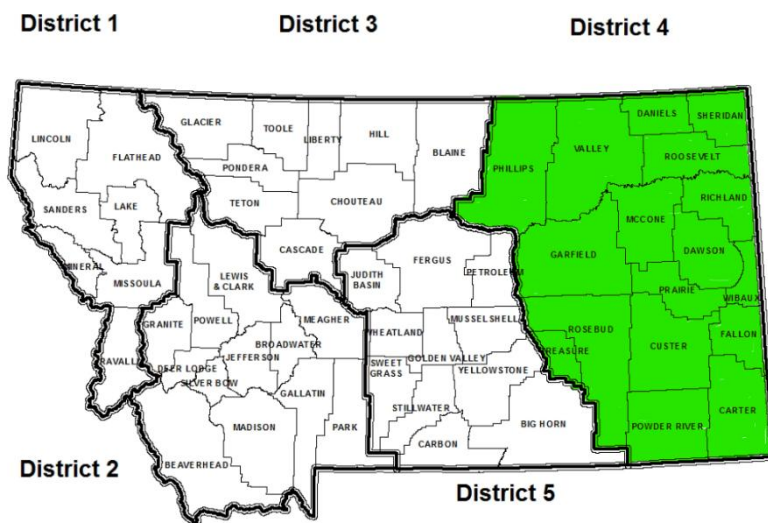
1. **Commercial, Non-Commercial, Special Utility, and Government Applicators and Dealers**

Pesticide applicators with the following categories need to earn 12 CEC's by December 31st, 2026.

- (5) Aquatic Pest
- (0) Dealer
- (2) Forest Pest
- (9) Non-Soil Fumigation
- (3) Ornamental and Turf
- (19) Piscicide
- (14) Special Utility
- (11) Wood Product Pest Control

2. **Private Applicators**

Private applicators in District 4 (Carter, Custer, Daniels, Dawson, Fallon, Fort Peck Reservation, Garfield, McCone, Northern Cheyenne Reservation (also in District 5), Phillips, Powder River, Prairie, Richland, Roosevelt, Rosebud, Sheridan, Treasure, Valley, Wibaux counties) need to either accrue six recertification credits to renew or take a closed book exam in the last year of the recertification cycle.



MDA Fall Pesticide Recertification

Training Opportunities



MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE

1. In-Person Fall Training Schedule

Below is a list of the Montana Department of Agriculture in-person fall recertification trainings offered with the date and location of the training. Each training has a fee of \$30. Please review the specific training agendas and credits earned per category for each training location prior to signing up. Upon signing up, details regarding the training will be emailed to participants.

- **October 14, 2026 – Billings**, Hampton Inn and Suites
- **October 15, 2026 – Belgrade**, Holiday Inn Express
- **October 20, 2026 – Kalispell**, Wachholz Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center
- **October 21, 2026 – Missoula**, Missoula Department of Ecology and Extension
- **November 5, 2026 – Great Falls**, Great Falls College MSU
- **December 8, 2026 – Helena**, Montana Historical Society

For location agendas, available credits, and to register, please visit our website at bit.ly/pestmt and scroll to “MDA Recertification Training In- person.”

2. Fall Webinar Opportunities – these are FREE – you just need to register!

November 18, 2026 – Control of Voles, presented by Stephen Vantassel

This webinar addresses management techniques for Montana’s voles. Characteristics to distinguish voles from other small mammals, basic vole biology, identification of vole damage, and how to monitor voles will be described in the webinar. In addition, a review of the use of habitat modification, exclusion, trapping methods, and rodenticides will be explained. Property owners or control operators will obtain information useful for the management of voles on both small and large acreages.

Here is the link to register: bit.ly/voles2026

December 9, 2026 – Montana Pesticide Dealers Webinar, presented by Matt Deaton

This 50-minute webinar provides Montana pesticide dealers with a practical overview of key compliance requirements, including proper pesticide storage, required dealer records, customer license verification, and what to expect during Montana Department of Agriculture inspections. It will also cover current licensing standards, including dealer exam and requalification requirements, recent updates affecting recordkeeping and licensing, and best practices for maintaining accurate restricted-use pesticide sales records and staying inspection-ready.

Here is the link to register: bit.ly/mtdealers2026



MSU Fall Pesticide Recertification Training Opportunities

1. 2026 Fall Pesticide Education Webinar Series

The MSU Extension Pesticide Education Program invites pesticide applicators, agricultural producers, landowners, and others to participate in the 2026 Pesticide Education Webinar Series. Each webinar is one hour and offers pesticide license credits. Register in advance online at: <https://www.montana.edu/extension/pesticides/events/webinar.html> [montana.edu].



- November 5, 12-1 pm: Precision Weed Management in Montana
- November 19, 12-1 pm: Management Options for Herbicide Resistant Kochia
- December 3, 12-1 pm: Aquatic Plant Management in Montana: Regulations, IPM and Key Species
- December 10, 1-2 pm: Basics of Non-Soil Fumigation for Montana Private Applicators

2. 2026 PAT District 4 Pest Management Tour

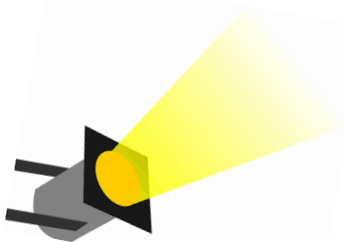
The annual Pest Management Tour is coming to eastern Montana September 28 – October 2 sponsored by the MSU Extension Pesticide Education Program and Integrated Pest Management Group. This tour is an excellent opportunity for District 4 private applicators to earn recertification credits before permits expire on December 31, 2025. Each morning and afternoon session offers three private applicator credits (pending) and participants may attend both sessions to earn six credits. Topics include crop insects, crop weeds, plant diseases of crops, pesticide application, vertebrate pest management, and weed management.

Tour Schedule

- September 28th – Scobey and Plentywood
- September 29th – Glasgow and Malta
- September 30th – Sidney and Glendive
- October 1st – Miles City and Broadus
- October 2nd - Forsyth

Registration deadlines, local contacts, fees, agendas, and credit information vary by location. Visit the Pest Management Tour webpage for complete details: <https://www.montana.edu/extension/pesticides/events/pmt.html> [montana.edu]. Contact Dr. Cecil Tharp, MSU Pesticide Education Specialist, for more information (406-994-5067; ctharp@montana.edu) or your MSU Extension PAT Coordinator at: <https://www.montana.edu/extension/pesticides/pat/patcolist.html> [montana.edu].

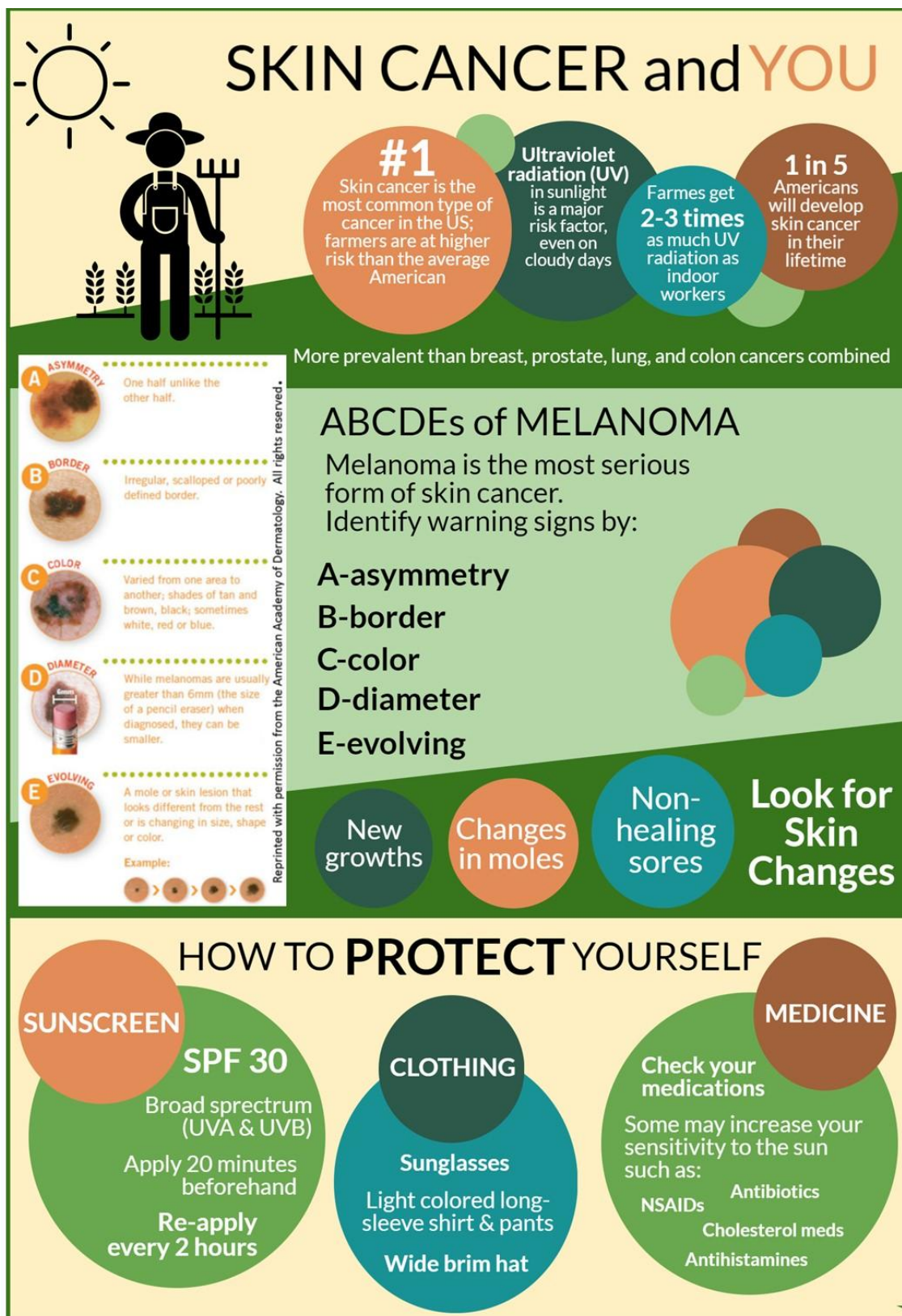
Resource Spotlight – Label and SDS (Safety Data Sheet) Databases



Pesticide labels contain information about how to use the product correctly and legally as well as potential hazards associated with the product. All registered product labels in the United States contain the following statement: **“It is a violation of Federal law to use this product in a manner inconsistent with its labeling.”** The EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) regulates most label statements. These regulations are intended to make labels consistent, easy to understand, and clearly describe the proper use of the product. Several versions of each pesticide product label may be available, but you are responsible for following the pesticide label directions on the product container that you purchased. Use this [Link](#) to access some databases which might be useful to find information on active and inert ingredients in pesticides and to find pesticide product labels. You will also be able to access pdf’s of pesticide labels and SDS sheets to print and put in your safety binders.

Defending Your Largest Organ

As a pesticide applicator, you face many risks and one silent one is repeated exposure to the sun, which can cause damaging changes to your skin. The graphic below describes facts about skin cancer, what skin changes to look for, and how to protect yourself. Image courtesy: *Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health*



Permanent Agricultural Plastic Recycling Facilities in Polson and Scobey

Credit: Kenzie Valenteen, NBC Montana

A first-of-its-kind facility is now open in northwest Montana aiming to keep plastic out of landfills. The new system located at the Lake County Weed Control Office processes plastic pesticide containers, turning waste into reusable material. “We do utilize a lot of pesticides and herbicides, so in the past we were utilizing a mobile unit getting to as many places as we can, but having a stationary unit allows the producers to bring us the containers at a time that’s convenient for them,” said Montana Department of Agriculture director Jillian Streit. Now, the new permanent granulator expands access across the Columbia Basin region. “It’s the first in the state and the region, and hopefully it will increase the amount of containers that we are able to recycle because we have a standard, set location,” said Streit.



Director Jillian Streit and Brett Heitshusen, Program Supervisor



Super seed bag in which 1400 lbs. of the finely ground plastic from recycled pesticide containers is blown into.

Recycling containers can also help prevent water pollution in Montana. “These containers are getting cleaned appropriately and then recycled instead of something else happening to them that could end up polluting our land and our waters,” said Flathead Biological Station assistant research professor Rachel Malison.

The machine inside is a Cumberland granulator so the plastic pesticide containers go through a size reduction process and then blown out into super seed bags each weighing about 1,400 pounds apiece when filled, according to Brett Heitshusen, the Sustainable Agriculture Programs Coordinator.

On June 11th, the grand opening for Montana’s second regional agricultural granulator was celebrated in Scobey. The installation of these two permanent granulators supplements the mobile grinding unit that regularly travels around the state at scheduled locations. The Montana Department of Agriculture recycling program has already kept more than 97,000 pounds of plastic out of landfills since 2009, and we hope to hit 1 million recycled pounds this year.



MDA Director Jillian Streit, Daniels County Extension Inga Hawbaker, and Daniels County Solid Waste representatives gather for the grand opening of the second agricultural granulator.

The Montana Department of Agriculture’s Container Recycling Program currently does not have a CDL driver for the recycling truck. As a result, all scheduled recycling events for the remainder of the summer of 2026 are CANCELLED until a driver is available. If you had an on-site container pick up scheduled, please contact Carli Davis by phone (406) 465-0531 or email Carli.Davis@mt.gov and we will notify you when a driver is available. Check out our event calendar at: [MDA Ag Container Recycling Calendar 2026](#)

Alternative drop-off options are available:

- **Lake County Weed Control regional granulator located at 39673 County Facility Lane, Polson**
If you have 100 or more containers to recycle, please contact the Lake County Weed Control office at 406-883-7330 in advance to arrange drop-off.
- **Daniels County Solid Waste regional granulator located at 713 C Street, Scobey**
STARTING AUGUST 18TH THROUGH OCTOBER – open Tuesdays from 9am – 2pm

All containers must be clean, triple-rinsed, and free of product residue; they will be inspected upon arrival.

If you are interested in supporting the Agricultural Container Recycling Program, please apply through the following job posting: [Pesticide Container Recycling Technician](#)

Vole Control – Tactics for Professionals

Stop me if you heard this story before. It's springtime and the snow is melting. You get a call from a client complaining about the snake-like trails in their lawn and they are asking you to fix it. Yes, it is almost a rite of spring. Clients in distress over the damage to their turf and ornamentals. If you would like to reduce these calls and help your clients look forward to the spring melt then consider the following tactics.

Tactic 1. Timing Matters

It is not well known but to prevent damage in spring, you must control voles in the fall. Look at Figure 1. Notice how vole numbers decrease in the winter as voles struggle to find food and stay warm. The lack of food makes voles attack ornamentals and tunnel through the grass as they take advantage of the snow cover to hide from predators. You can help your client immensely by reducing the vole population significantly before the arrival of winter. Fewer voles means less damage to plantings. It's really that simple.

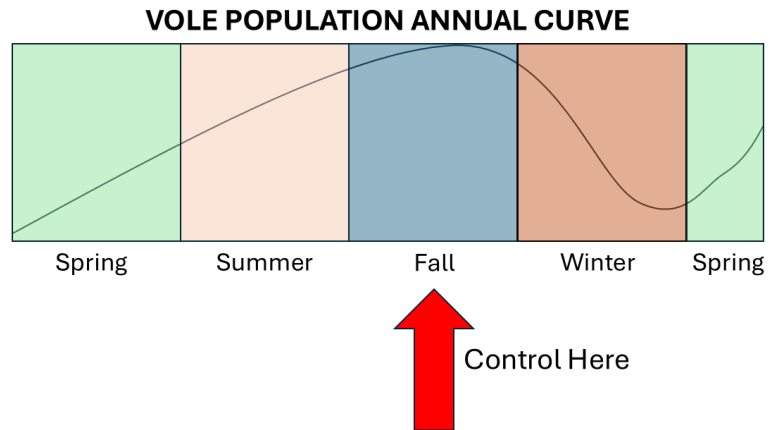


Figure 1. Vole population annual curve.

Tactic 2. Reduce the Availability of Food

Integrated Pest Management takes a wholistic approach to pest management by addressing the conditions that allow the pest to thrive. This principle is no less true for control of voles. Reduce food sources by ensuring grass is cut before it seeds. Modify bird feeders to prevent spilled grain from satisfying the dining needs of voles. My publication on modifying bird feeders can be easily downloaded by clicking the link available on this page <https://agr.mt.gov/Topics/Q-Z/vertebrate-pest-pages/vertebrate-pest-bulletins>

Tactic 3. Reduce Ground Cover

Everything eats voles, so they are constantly looking for areas to move while hidden from the watchful eye of hungry predators. Keep grass trimmed to a length short enough that it cannot bend over and create a canopy for voles. Establish weed-free zones around trees. Ideally the zone should be out to the drip line but even a few feet can be very helpful. Provide additional protection for young trees and plantings with thin bark by installing barriers (Fig. 2). Barriers should be tall enough to extend above average snow line. If you have rabbits, extend the barrier at least 18 inches above anticipated snow line.



Figure 2. Plastic wrap to protect a tree. Don't forget to include a weed-free zone.

Helping your clients appreciate the value of these three tactics for managing vole damage will go a long way in preventing disappointment in the spring.

For more information on the control of voles, modifying bird feeders and using bait stations visit <https://agr.mt.gov/Vertebrate-Pests>

Stephen M. Vantassel is the Vertebrate Pest Specialist for the Montana Department of Agriculture. He can be reached at svantassel@mt.gov or 406-431-7720

Using iNaturalist to Report Invasive Species in Montana

Liz Lodman, Program Manager, Montana Invasive Species Program Manager and
Russ Hartzell Program Coordinator, Montana Invasive Species Council

Early detection of invasive species can help protect Montana's rangeland, cropland, forests, and water resources. The sooner we know about an invasive species, the quicker we can respond to control, eradicate, or prevent further spread.



Natural resource staff and contractors are trained to use mapping and reporting tools like EDDMapS and Survey 123 to track invasive species. But these applications aren't readily available to the public. An opportunity was spotted to take the user friendly and popular **iNaturalist** application and encourage the public to report unusual sightings and invasive species by simply snapping a photo with their cell phone.

iNaturalist is an online network that allows the public to record and identify observations of plants, animals, and other organisms. You can download the free app on your cell phone, snap a photo, and the app will suggest what you are looking at. iNaturalist has integrated geolocation features as well as AI-assisted identification tools that can make a quick identification from good quality photos.

All iNaturalist observations are verified by a worldwide group of taxonomic experts. Observations that occur in Montana are sent to the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MTNHP) where reliable reports are then added to the MTNHP database of species and shared with natural resource managers.

The Montana Invasive Species Council and MTNHP have collaborated to promote the use of iNaturalist for reporting invasive species. Since this effort began in the fall of 2025, the number of "observers" (users) in Montana has nearly doubled to 25,000 people. iNaturalist observations in Montana have already led to new detection of rush skeletonweed in a county and the first record of a non-native snail in the state. Both of these detections happened because someone was curious or concerned about what they saw, took a quick photo, and submitted the photo to iNaturalist.

Anyone who lives, works or recreates in Montana can use iNaturalist to help spot new infestations before they become costly problems. Follow the simple steps below to sign up for iNaturalist and use it to report invasive species.

Learn more at https://mtnhp.mt.gov/submit/Citizen_Science or <https://invasivespecies.mt.gov>

How to Report Invasive Species in Montana

Download the iNaturalist app

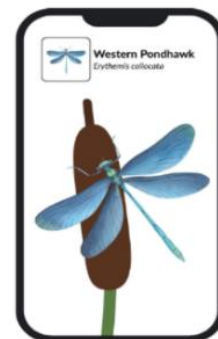


Take a Photo or Record a Sound



Next Steps

- App will suggest an identification
- Accept that or suggest your own identification
- Other iNaturalist users around the globe can confirm your identification or suggest another



What Happens to Observations You Report?

- Observations will be identified by volunteer citizen scientists in the iNaturalist community and agency biologists
- Observations with confirmed species identifications are brought into statewide databases monthly
- Weed and aquatic invasive species managers and other natural resource managers are emailed reports of infestations.
- Control efforts are undertaken to prevent further spread

How-To iNaturalist Resources



More Ways to Report Invasives:

<https://invasivespecies.mt.gov/report>

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