

Pest Control Adviser (PCA) Course Guide

Catalog Year 2026-2027



In California, any professional who presents themselves as a pest control expert or sells pest control projects must hold a Pest Control Adviser License issued by the California Department of Pesticide Regulation. To qualify for the PCA license the applicant must complete 42 semester units in core courses across four distinct subject areas:

- 1) Physical, Biological and Natural Sciences 12 units
- 2) Crop Health.....6 units
- 3) Pest Management Systems & Methods [with one course in Integrated Pest Management]9 units
- 4) Production Systems6 units
- Electives: 9 additional units drawn from the four categories above9 units
- Total.....42 units**

Plant Science Majors complete these 42 core units as part of their degree. However, students in other majors that want a PCA license must schedule their courses carefully to ensure they complete all 42 core units. Below is a guide to help students meet the PCA license unit requirements and prepare them to pass the State's PCA Exam.

Before you begin planning your PCA coursework, it is recommended that you consider the following:

Complete BIOL 11 and CHEM 3A as soon as possible – BIOL 11 and CHEM 3A are essential prerequisites for most Plant Science courses. Taking them within your first two semesters is highly advised.

Consider minoring in Plant Science - Plant Science Minors receive priority registration for Plant Science courses. Also, all of the minor coursework can be counted toward the 42-unit PCA requirements.

Check your transcripts first – Many community college courses count toward the PCA core unit requirements. Use the Department of Pesticide Regulations Approved Course List to see if you have already met some of the core unit requirements at: <https://www.cdpr.ca.gov/apply-for-a-license/approved-pest-control-adviser-pca-courses/>

RECOMMENDED COURSES FOR PCA QUALIFICATION

Below is a list of recommended courses to reach the 42 core unit requirement for the PCA License. This list guarantees that you will qualify to take the PCA exam and complete the Minor in Plant Science. Please note that:

- This list assumes that you do not have any previous course units that fulfil PCA requirements
- PLANT 163 – Integrated Pest Management (underlined) is a requirement for the PCA Exam
- A complete list of Plant Science courses and their PCA Knowledge Categories is on the back of this sheet.

Physical, Biological & Natural Sciences Requirement: 12 units BIOL 11 – Plant Biology (3 units) CHEM 3A – Intro to General Chemistry (3 units) PLANT 100 – Aspects of Crop Productivity (3 units)• PLANT 150 – Crop Improvement (3 units)	Pest Management Systems & Methods Requirement: 9 units PLANT 161 – Plant Pathology (3 units)• PLANT 162 – Economic Entomology (3 units)• <u>PLANT 163 – Integrated Pest Management (3 units)•</u>
Crop Health Requirement: 6 units PLANT 71 – Agricultural Water (3 units)• PLANT 160 – Weed Science (3 units)•	Production Systems Requirement: 6 units PLANT 124e – Organic Production (3 units) PLANT 140 Greenhouse & Nursery Production (3 units)
Recommended Electives, Requirement: 9 units Select 3 or the courses listed below (Select at least 1 of the 3 courses in bold to complete the minor)	
PLANT 1 – Intro to Plant Science PLANT 20 – Intro to Crop Science PLANT 30 – Intro to Fruit Science PLANT 40 – Intro to Ornamental. Hort. PLANT 60 – Intro to Plant Health•	PLANT 120 – Row Crops PLANT 121 – Cereal & Forage Crops PLANT 122 – Range Ecology PLANT 123e – Vegetable Production PLANT 130 – California Fruit Species PLANT 132 – Principles of Pomology II PLANT 133 – Citrus & Subtropical Fruits PLANT 164 – Nematology• PLANT 165 – Pesticides• PLANT 166 – Mycology•

• Indicates a course required to complete the Plant Science Minor

PLANT SCIENCE COURSES BY PCA KNOWLEDGE CATEGORY

Physical, Biological & Natural Science

BIOL 11 – Plant Biology (3 units)
CHEM 3A – Intro to General Chemistry (3 units)
PLANT 1 – Introduction to Plant Science (3 units)
PLANT 100 – Aspects of Crop Productivity (3 units)
PLANT 150 – Crop Improvement (3 units)
PLANT 166 – Mycology (3 units)

Crop Health

PLANT 60 – Introduction to Plant Health (3 units)
PLANT 71 – Agricultural Water (3 units)
PLANT 101 – Crop Nutrition (3 units)
PLANT 142 – Woody Plant Material (3 units)
PLANT 160 – Weed Science (3 units)
PLANT 161 – Plant Pathology (3 units)
PLANT 162 – Economic Entomology (3 units)
PLANT 164 – Nematology (3 units)
PLANT 171 – Soils in the Environment (3 units)
PLANT 172 – Soils (3 units)
PLANT 172L – Soils Lab (3 units)
PLANT 175 – Irrigation Systems (3 units)

Pest Management Systems

PLANT 60 – Intro to Plant Health (3 units)
PLANT 160 – Weed Science (3 units)
PLANT 161 – Plant Pathology (3 units)
PLANT 162 – Economic Entomology (3 units)
PLANT 163 – Integrated Pest Management (3 units)
PLANT 165 – Pesticides (3 units)
PLANT 166 – Mycology (3 units)
PLANT 167 – Diagnosis & Control of Plant Disease (3 units)

Production Systems

PLANT 20 – Intro to Crop Science (3 units)
PLANT 30 – Intro to Fruit Science (3 units)
PLANT 40 – Intro to Ornamental Horticulture (3 units)
PLANT 120 – Row Crops (3 units)
PLANT 121 – Cereal and Forage Crops (3 units)
PLANT 122 – Range Ecology (3 units)
PLANT 123e – Vegetable Production (3 units)
PLANT 124e – Organic Crop Production (3 units)
PLANT 130 – California Fruit Species (3 units)
PLANT 132 – Principles of Pomology II (3 units)
PLANT 133 – Citrus & Subtropical Fruits (3 units)
PLANT 140 – Greenhouse & Nursery Production (3 units)
PLANT 141 – Woody Plant Materials (3 units)
PLANT 142 – Herbaceous Plant Materials (3 units)
PLANT 143 – Turfgrass Prod. & Management (3 units)

PCA LICENSURE RESOURCES

To receive a PCA License the applicant must:

1. Meet the educational requirements
 - a. A bachelor's degree in an agricultural related field with the 42 core units
 - b. 24 months of relevant work experience AND completion of the 42 core units
2. Pass the DPR's "PCA Laws and Regulations Exam" AND at least one of the seven "Subject Exams"

Agricultural Pest Control Advisor License Packet: <https://www.cdpr.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/adviser.pdf>

This PDF put together by the California DPR includes all information on how to qualify for, and apply to take, the PCA exams.

Department of Pesticide Regulations Approved Course List: <https://www.cdpr.ca.gov/apply-for-a-license/approved-pest-control-adviser-pca-courses/>

A list of all DPR approved core-unit courses by course title, university/college, and core category.

Recommended Study Materials for PCA Exams: <https://www.cdpr.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/pca.pdf>

A list of study materials, separated by exam.

Contact Email for questions: LicenseMail@cdpr.ca.gov

Email any questions you have about the process to this address. The DPR is generally responsive to applicants.