Delaware Approves Continuing Education Alternatives For Pesticides And Nutrients Following COVID Struggles

DOVER, Del. (February 4, 2021) – Over this past year, Delaware farmers and pesticide applicators have had to pivot, joining the rest of the population in utilizing online learning to earn continuing education credits. However, dealing with limited internet options in rural Delaware communities and other technical challenges, many individuals have been prevented from gaining the credits needed to maintain their nutrient management or pesticide certifications.

“I have heard from many of the people we serve about the hardships they have faced trying to go online and participate in training. Our producers are used to going to Delaware Ag Week, attending field days and workshops in person. Sitting at a computer to take an eight-hour training doesn’t work when you need to be in the field harvesting,” said Delaware Secretary of Agriculture Michael T. Scuse. “We know broadband and high-speed internet can be non-existent in Delaware’s rural communities. And when you offer suggestions on how you can remedy this and advise where to turn, the standard recommendations don’t work during a pandemic.”

The Delaware Department of Agriculture (DDA) is offering extensions and COVID credit exemptions depending on the type of recertification to accommodate individuals who have exhausted all options in earning their continuing education credits.

At the Delaware Nutrient Management Commission meeting on February 2, Secretary Scuse asked the commissioners to consider extending the time for which Commercial and Private Nutrient Handlers and Nutrient Generators have to accumulate six credit hours of continuing education. The commissioners voted and approved an extension increasing the time from three to four years for those certificate holders expiring on May 1, 2021.

University of Delaware Nutrient Management staff has held a record number of virtual events through 2020 and 2021, as well as increased on-demand education from their website in response to the COVID-19 pandemic aiding the roughly 1,800 certificate holders in keeping up with their credits. Additionally, course packets are available with materials eligible for up to six credits that can be mailed to farmers free of charge if they have difficulty connecting to online resources. For more information or to obtain a packet, certified individuals can contact Hilary Gibson or Sydney Riggi at the Kent County Cooperative Extension Office at (302) 730-4000 or email nutrient-management@udel.edu.

Commercial and private pesticide applicators who have explored all training options and are still falling short of the quota needed must contact the DDA Pesticides Section by the extension date of March 31, 2021. Applicators can review their credits at https://dda.force.com/pesticide. Pesticide applicators can request a COVID credit exemption by contacting Kenda Galipo at (302)698-4571.

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