

# CALIFORNIA VOLUNTARY WEED-FREE FORAGE INSPECTION PROTOCOL

## SECTION I – INTRODUCTION

The following details the California Department of Food and Agriculture's (CDFA) voluntary protocol for certifying weed-free forage including hay, straw, or mulch and straw wattles. Authority to certify forage as weed-free is permitted under California Food and Agricultural Code sections 5101 and 5205 under authority of section 403. Forage certified under this protocol will be inspected for actionable plant pests listed in the following:

- State noxious weed list, [California Code of Regulations \(CCR\) section 4500](#)
- A or Q rated plants not designated as a noxious weed in CCR Section 4500
- Federal noxious weeds list  
[http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant\\_health/plant\\_pest\\_info/weeds/downloads/weedlist.pdf](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/weeds/downloads/weedlist.pdf)

Certification should be requested by the producer early enough to allow submission of questionable samples to CDFA's Plant Pest Diagnostics Laboratory for identification and to ensure proper timing of field inspections.

For a list of California Certified Weed-Free Forage and Straw Suppliers, contact your local County Agricultural Commissioner's Office.

## SECTION II – INSPECTION REQUIREMENTS

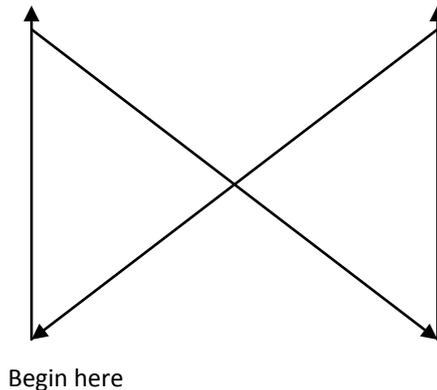
Forage shall be free of those noxious weeds listed in [CCR section 4500](#), A or Q rated plant pests, and federal noxious weeds.

1. Forage shall be inspected in California by state or county regulatory officials. An inspector may not inspect fields of which said inspector has ownership or financial interest.
2. Forage shall also be inspected in the field of origin (field shall include surrounding ditches, fence rows, roads, easement, rights of way, and adequate buffer zone surrounding the field) following the walking patterns described in 3a. or 3b. below.
3. Field shall be inspected within 10 days of cutting or harvesting by the proper officials or authority. There should be a minimum of two entry points per field and minimum of one entry point per 10 acres. Each point of entry shall be at least 150 feet into the field and each additional 150 feet traveled shall constitute an entry point. Travel shall be uninterrupted, proceeding through the field being inspected.

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**a. Walking Pattern – Option 1:**

This walking pattern is similar to the letter X. Start in one corner of the field and inspect plants along one edge of the field. At the end of the field, diagonally cross through the center to the opposite corner. Then walk the edge of the field (opposite from where you started) to the corner. Finally, diagonally cross the field again to finish at the corner where you began.



In addition the entire perimeter should be driven, walked, or reviewed. A buffer zone surrounding the field should be established and inspected at the discretion of the inspector.

**b. Walking Pattern – Option 2:**

A statistical method is used to walk fields. The accuracy of this method is based on the number of plants observed compared to the number of plants in the field. This method provides a minimum of 95% confidence in detecting an infection of 0.1%. In most crops, the confidence level will be greater than 95%.

**Statistical Method of Field Walking**

To determine how to conduct field inspections, inspectors must first know the number of acres in the field. This information should be obtained when the inspection is requested. Then, the inspector needs to determine the minimum number of passes required for each field using the chart below.

- i. Select the minimum number of field passes from the table below based on the number of acres in the field. For example, a 30-acre field calls for a minimum of 17 passes.
- ii. Estimate the length of the field borderline. Figures should be close, but they do not need to be exact. (For this example, use 1,100 feet.)

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- iii. Equally space the passes along a field borderline (1,100 feet/17 passes = 65 feet per pass).
- iv. Walk the passes including the field borders at the end of the pass. If the last scheduled pass does not reach the field border, continue to walk additional passes. When walking at the edge of the field, the inspector should walk approximately 10 feet inside the field to maximize the number of plants examined.

**Minimum number of field passes for each field**

Minimum # of Acres in Field	Field Passes
0-1.0	6
1.1-5.0	9
5.1-10.0	11
10.1-20.0	13
20.1-50.0	17
50.1-100.0	20
100.1-200.0	24
200.1-500.0	30
500.1-1000.0	36
1000.0+	42

In addition, the entire perimeter should be driven, walked, or reviewed. A buffer zone surrounding the field should be established and inspected at the discretion of the inspector.

- 4. Storage area where certified weed-free forage will be stored and surrounding buffer must be inspected for weeds prior to harvesting and storing certified forage.
- 5. Forage which contains any noxious weeds, or undesirable plant species, as identified in [CCR section 4500](#), A or Q rated pests, and federal noxious weeds may be certified if the following requirements are met:
  - a. Field upon which the forage was produced was treated to prevent seed formation or seed ripening to the degree that there is no danger of dissemination of the seed, or any injurious portion thereof from such noxious weeds, or undesirable plant species, or the propagating parts of the plant are not capable of producing a new plant.
  - b. Noxious weed(s) or undesirable plant species was treated not later than rosette to bud stage, or boot stage for grass species classified as weeds, prior to cutting or harvesting.
  - c. Treatment methods can include but are not limited to: burning, mowing, cutting or rouging, mechanical methods, or chemicals. Mechanical methods include excluding borders / perimeters or swath rows.

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6. Pellets and pelleted milled feeds may be certified in the field (before it is pelleted) or may be certified based on official testing by CDFA's Plant Pest Diagnostics Laboratory for weed seed viability.
7. Cubes must be certified in the field. Cubes are hay harvested with equipment which forms the hay into small compact self-binding units. These are not considered pellets and the field of origin must be certified. There is no lab testing.

**SECTION III – CERTIFICATION**

**Certificate of Quarantine Compliance (CQC) may be issued if:**

If requested, a CQC may be issued to document that the above minimum requirements have been met based upon a reasonable and prudent visual inspection as outlined in the walking patterns described in Section II above. Copies of the CQC must accompany any bill of sale for all portions of the processed forage harvested from a certified field to maintain the identity of the forage.