

**2008 SUGGESTED AREAS OF STUDY PERTAINING TO COUNTY  
AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER/DEPUTY COMMISSIONER  
SEALER/DEPUTY SEALER ORAL EXAMS**

*CCR Section 121 states: "Examinations shall be of such character as fairly to test and determine the qualifications, fitness and ability of competitors actually to perform the duties of the classification for which they seek licenses. Examinations may be assembled or unassembled, written or oral, or in the form of a demonstration of skill, or any combination of these; and any investigation of character, personality, education and experience and any tests of intelligence, capacity, technical knowledge, manual skill, or physical fitness which the Secretary deems appropriate, may be employed."*

**PREPARATION AND STUDY SUGGESTIONS:**

Questions will be prepared from occurrences that have been "experienced" by Commissioners, Sealers, and their Deputies and from the general knowledge they possess regarding local, state, and federal government.

- ❖ Develop a system to catalog information.
- ❖ Form a study group
- ❖ Ask your Commissioner, Sealer, Deputies for insight.
- ❖ Ask your State Department representatives for insight.
- ❖ Hold Mock interviews. *The more practice, the more comfortable you will be.*
- ❖ Attend seminars, workshops, supervisory/management training, etc.
- ❖ Set time aside to study and be diligent with it.

**APPLICATION FORM AND RESUMES:**

- ❖ FILL OUT YOUR APPLICATION COMPLETELY; include job your history.
- ❖ Make sure the application is legible. It is a reflection on you that is the first impression left with the panel.
- ❖ It is permissible to submit a resume along with your application. However, please complete at least the job titles, and employment dates on your application form.
- ❖ DO NOT BRING A RESUME TO THE INTERVIEW. The panel will not have time to properly review it after your interview has commenced.
- ❖ Do not assume the panel knows you from previous interviews or work.

**HELPFUL HINTS FOR THE INTERVIEW ITSELF, AND PANEL EXPECTATIONS:**

- ❖ Arrive early!
- ❖ Manage your time and cover each question adequately
- ❖ Answer completely but concisely. Organize your thoughts before you speak.
- ❖ Be Positive and Confident! Make NO Excuses! SMILE! Relax, and listen carefully.
- ❖ Ask for clarification if you do not understand the question.
- ❖ Always answer questions at the level of license you are seeking.

**ORAL EXAM PROCESS:**

- ❖ Bring photo ID and appointment card to the interview.

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- ❖ Proctor will verify ID, provide blank copies of two exam questions, escort the candidate to a preparation room, no outside materials will be permitted (including notes, bags and/or cell phones/handhelds, etc.).
- ❖ Candidates will have 20 minutes (40 minutes if cross filing) to prepare their response to the two questions per license provided.
- ❖ Proctor will time candidates, collect their notes, and escort them to the panel room.
- ❖ Panel will consist of a chairperson, and one representative from: CACASA, CDFA and DPR. CACASA reps will be Officers, President Elect, VP AG and VP W & M. Department representatives will be County/State Liaisons.
- ❖ The oral interview will begin with introductions, instructions, and then questions, followed by an opportunity for the candidate to wrap it up/summarize their qualifications/experience. Interview will last 40 minutes (80 minutes for cross filing).
- ❖ The interview will be tape recorded for quality control purposes.
- ❖ During the interview candidates will be asked two of the questions they have not previewed and two questions the candidate prepared for in advance of the interview.
- ❖ The candidate will be given the opportunity to add anything to their previous answers if they want, and to summarize their qualifications for the license at the end.
- ❖ The Panel Chairperson will give final instructions to the candidate not to talk to anyone (even their commissioner or sealer) until all interviews have been completed statewide and the results have been sent to all candidates.
- ❖ Once all examinations have been conducted, statewide, candidates may discuss the questions with other candidates and their commissioner or sealer.
- ❖ Panel members may not be contacted until after the appeal period is over (30 days after the results are sent to all candidates).
- ❖ If candidates feel they were not given a fair interview, they have a right to file a written appeal to the Secretary of CDFA outlining their reasons for appealing the panel's decision.

**GENERAL QUESTION SUBJECT MATTER:** [www.dpa.ca.gov](http://www.dpa.ca.gov)

- ❖ Sexual harassment prevention and how you as a supervisor deal with supervisors/ employees to prevent sexual harassment. Training requirements. Liability.
- ❖ County Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer Appointment/Removal Process.
- ❖ Knowledge of how county government works-who is the County Administrator, how the Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer works with other county departments with regard to the Board of Supervisor agendas, how contracts are processed.
- ❖ CACASA Structure and purpose, *Know the Officer Positions and Committees*. Know the makeup, organization and on-going issues pertaining to the California Agricultural Commissioners and Sealers Association (CACASA Handbook).
- ❖ Labor relations with emphasis on employee assistance programs, discipline, supervision, and handling employee complaints.
- ❖ Management and leadership skills, with emphasis on running a county department or major division. Succession Planning and Staff Development.

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- ❖ Public relations and communications in sensitive areas such as pesticide applications adjacent to urban areas, eradication programs, citizen/constituent complaints, etc. How you handle irate people and interact on issues with the Board of Supervisor members.
- ❖ Ethics and Fair Political Practices requirements.
- ❖ Public Information requirements and Processing a Request; and Record Retention Policies.

**ADMINISTRATION**

- What does “Administration” mean to you? This is a perfect place to begin. Webster’s defines administration as “the management of governmental or institutional affairs.” To administer is to give out or dispense; to furnish help or be of service.
- Public Administration; are you a public administrator?
- Accountability – keeping your supervisor informed.
- How does county government function?
- What types of actions require Board of Supervisor approval?
- What are the process/steps involved to bring an item before the Board?
- How do you process and obtain approval for a contract from CDFA/DMS/DPR through your county’s system?
- Is “administration” different from “management?” If so, how? If not, why?
- What is FMLA? To whom is it most important... an administrator, a manager, or a supervisor? What does it do? How does an administrator view it compared to a manager or supervisor?
- Do you know your county department’s sexual harassment policy and how to handle it?
- Know about “diversity” and why it might be important, workplace violence policy, etc.
- Know about “Conflict of Interest” and Fair Political Practices.
- Know the process by which disaster declarations are made at the various levels and what a declaration accomplishes at each level.
- Know how a Commissioner and/or Sealer are appointed and how they can be removed from the position.

**BUDGET**

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- Know what kinds of things are/can be budgeted, i.e. personnel, equipment, funding, etc.
- By what process is your budget adopted?
- How would you reduce your budget? What if instructed to reduce it by 20%?
- Is a “Work plan” a form of budgeting? How or how not?
- How does “Leave without-pay” affect a budget?
- What are the main components of a budget? Salaries & Benefits; Services & Supplies; Fixed Assets; Expenditure; Revenue; Net County Cost; etc.
- What are the main sources of funding for your budget?
- What authority do you have to charge fees? How does Government Code Section 54985 relate to how much can be charged?

**CACASA**

- What is CACASA?
- Who are the officer/positions of CACASA? – President; President-Elect; Ag V-P; W&M V-P; Executive Secretary. What is their term of office?
- How does it function, how is business conducted?
- How is an issue brought before CACASA from any County Commissioner or Sealer office? How does it become an “action” item and what that means?
- Who is the Executive Director? Why?
- What committees are “Standing” committees? What do they do?
- What are the “Program” committees? Why are they called Program Committees?

**C DFA**

- Know what CDFA’s organizational structure is in relationship to State government... CDFA is a state agency in the Governor’s cabinet.
- Familiarize yourself with the details of the functional areas of the department, such as Plant Health and Pest Prevention, Inspection Services, etc. They can be found on the department’s website.
- Know how contracts are developed with each County and CDFA?

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- What is the name of the section of CDFA that administers and gives oversight to the county licensing activities?
- What information is in the California Agricultural Resource Directory and what is its value to a Deputy or Commissioner?
- In which functional area, within CDFA, does the County-State Liaison work?
- Can CDFA declare emergencies? How and what is their impact?
- Explain the relationship between the County Agricultural Commissioner and CDFA.
- Know what function the State Board of Food and Agriculture serves.

**DMS**

- To whom does DMS report?
- Know which W&M programs are administered by which Branch within DMS.
- What relationship does DMS hold with NIST? (NTEP certified lab)
- Does your county recognize Seals from other counties on devices used in your county? Why? Would you recognize them any differently? If so, how? Why?
- What does “uniform standards of weights and measures” mean to you?
- Know at what level Device Registration fees are charged by your county. Are they at the maximum? If not, why not?
- Variable Frequency of Inspections; know why it’s used and how you go about establishing it.
- Explain the relationship between the County Sealer and DMS.

**DPR**

- What is the department head’s title at DPR? How is the department head placed in the position? To whom does the DPR department head report?
- What affiliations does DPR have with other state agencies/departments, organizations, groups, etc.
- How is DPR funded?
- How has the ERR impacted your county? What recommendations would you make to improve it?
- Know how DPR provides funding to County Agricultural Commissioners.
- How are pesticide applications made without an EIR being conducted?

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- What are the pros and cons of 100% use reporting?
- Why is Environmental Justice significant? Whom does it represent?
- Explain the relationship between County Agricultural Commissioners and DPR.

**ETHICS**

- Read the “Code of Ethics” in the CACASA Handbook.
- How do an employee’s work habits demonstrate their “work ethic?”
- Can the enforcement, or lack of enforcement of ethics (and whose standards) effect morale?
- Should ethical standards during off hours be any different than during work hours?
- Any ethical concerns with “tokens of appreciation” whether received or given?
- Ethical dilemma: which one is “right,” doing what is the right thing, or doing what you have the right to do?
- Be aware of CCR Title 3. Food and Agriculture, Division 1, Chapter 2, Article 1, Section 101. It pertains to the license you are seeking.

**LEADERSHIP**

- Consider what leadership means to you. What or who comes to mind when you think of leadership?
- Who can be or is a leader? Is it necessary to have a “title” in order to be considered a leader?
- How does a leader lead?
- Can leadership be learned or are you born with it?
- Two types of leaders: formal and informal. What is the difference? What is the significance of knowing this information?
- What characteristics make a leader a leader?
- What leadership traits can cause a leader to fail?

**MANAGEMENT**

- What do you think of when you here the word/term “management?” Is it a category, classification, a noun , or a verb?

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- According to Webster’s dictionary Management is the act, art, or manner of managing, or handling, controlling, directing, etc. It further defines “skillful” managing; careful, tactful treatment. It also points out persons collectively, regarded as a distinct social group with special interests, characteristic economic views, etc.
- Understand how knowing the principles of effective Administration, Ethics, Leadership, Philosophy, and Supervision affect you management ability.
- What is meant by the term: Management-By-Waling-Around (MBWA)? How is it effective, how can it not be effective?
- Have you considered a personal Professional Growth plan?
- What about Succession Plans? How do you see yourself involved? How would you create such a plan?

**PHILOSOPHY**

- Why should these kinds of changes be made to the structure of the Oral Exams? What do you see as the “pros and cons?”
- What is your vision for your career? What do you think can help you the most to achieve that goal?
- Do you have a “vision” of your career goal? What is your goal? What will you need to achieve it? What can most help you?
- Do you understand how knowing your personality profile/type will alleviate your stress, whether in your personal life or job?
- How does the phrase “all for one, and one for all” apply to the relationships held by the Ag Commissioners and Sealers with influences from such sources as local, state, other states, and/or the rest of the world?
- What is “your” enforcement philosophy?
- What do you think about the state/county relationship? Is it the best way to deliver services of CDFA, DMS, or DPR?
- “*Do... or do not, there is no try.*” – Yoda. How do you see this quote being relevant to attitude and communication?
- “*[There is a] difference between what you have a right to do, and what is the right thing to do.*” – Potter Stewart, U.S. Supreme Court Justice
- “*We can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.*” – Albert Einstein

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- Know how your thinking, or that of those around you, can be part of the problem, or part of the solution. Are you incorrect, if you are the only one with that thought?

**SCENARIO**

- A scenario question may be asked with no prep time or given in advance or your interview. The purpose is to give you the opportunity to demonstrate your readiness and your ability to “think on your feet,” like actually happens on the job. The intent is to help you develop the skills you will need or to demonstrate that you are ready for the job.
- You may be asked to prepare a “press release” for presenting to the panel regarding an actual event or circumstance.
- You might receive a telephone call during your interview. You could be asked by the caller, who they might talk to regarding an agricultural matter that you may or may not have authority over... who would you refer the caller to?
- Could be a review of actual circumstances faced by one of the Ag Commissioners or Sealers. You would be asked for your assessment of how the situation was handled including ways you would suggest it could have been handled differently and why.

**SUPERVISION**

- What is “Supervision?”
- Is it or isn’t it “manipulation?” Why?
- What “rights” do you have as a supervisor to direct staff? From where do those “rights” come? – Job description.
- What is FLSA? Why is it important for a supervisor to know about it?
- How does “informal leadership” affect a supervisor?
- How and by whom can supervision be considered “micro-management?”
- What are the effects of a lack of supervision?
- What about delegating? What you should or shouldn’t delegate, and to whom? Are you being lazy or mentoring?
- Why is it important, or is it, that a supervisor possess the technical knowledge of the task for which he/she is supervising?
- Know what Progressive Discipline is and why it’s important to a supervisor. Be familiar with grievance procedures.

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**Suggested Reading:**

- *how* Why HOW We Do Anything Means Everything... in Business (*and in Life*) by Dov Seidman
- *Leadership Wired* – [www.injoy.com/newsletters](http://www.injoy.com/newsletters)
- *The Exceptional Presenter* by Timothy J. Koegel

**REMEMBER!**

Talk to your Commissioner/Sealer, Assistant, Deputies, and Liaison, Network with other applicants, attend a Board of Supervisors meeting, look at one of their agendas. Attend CACASA meetings, attend CASAP workshops... join CASAP.