

Arizona Department of Agriculture Key Regulatory Responsibilities

Three Department divisions did not inspect some higher-risk establishments and inefficiently used inspection resources, and Department licensed applicants who did not meet all licensing requirements and did not retain public records as required

Audit purpose

To determine if the Department's processes for inspecting regulated individuals, devices, and establishments; licensing applicants; and retaining public records related to its licensing and inspection functions are in accordance with State requirements and recommended practices.

Key findings

- The Environmental Services Division, Pest Management Division, and Weights and Measures Services Division did not always prioritize higher-risk establishments and licensees—such as pest management applicators; establishments that sell seed, feed, fertilizer, and pesticides; gas station fueling devices; and small scales used by retail establishments that sell products by weight—for inspection and coordinate or plan their inspection activities, resulting in duplicated effort, unnecessary travel, and not efficiently using inspectors' time.
- The Department did not inspect nearly two-thirds of licensed airport scales and any licensed medical marijuana dispensary scales to ensure their accuracy during calendar years 2015 through 2019.
- The Department licensed 281 pest management qualified applicators who provide pest management services in homes, schools, and businesses without obtaining required criminal history background checks.
- The Department licensed 66 percent of the license applicants we reviewed, including industrial hemp license applicants, agricultural pesticide applicator license applicants, and service technicians who install and repair commercial scales, even though they did not meet all licensing requirements.
- The Department failed to retain public records related to its licensing and inspection functions.

Key recommendations

The Department should:

- Require the regulatory divisions we reviewed to develop and implement risk-based, data-driven, and internally coordinated inspection approaches to help ensure higher-risk licensees and establishments are inspected and to help minimize duplicated effort and travel.
- Require the regulatory divisions we reviewed to establish inspection goals and performance metrics for division inspectors and regularly monitor inspectors' performance against the established goals and metrics.
- Inspect all airport scales by the end of fiscal year 2021 in line with its established goal and work with its Assistant Attorney General to help ensure it inspects licensed scales and packaged products sold by weight at medical marijuana dispensaries.
- License only those applicants who meet all licensing requirements.
- Comply with the State's public records laws, maintain necessary records to provide an accurate accounting of its licensing and inspection activities, and clearly communicate and provide training on records retention requirements and expectations to its staff.