

Informal Review of ANR Products—Guidelines to Keep You Out of Trouble

The Communications Advisory Board recommends that every product created by UC ANR personnel be reviewed by other experts before being disseminated to the public. ANR-numbered publications go through a formal peer review process carried out by UC ANR Associate Editors. The Board believes that other products— such as blog posts, web pages, newsletters, newspaper columns, articles in trade journals, online training programs, YouTube videos and county publications—should receive at least an informal review as well.



Informal review helps ensure your credible, relevant materials are delivered without unforeseen pitfalls.

1. Types of materials and options for review

Review helps assure that products disseminated by ANR are high quality and contain accurate information. Here are recommended ways in which to do this:

- For many of these products, an **informal review** is sufficient. Send a draft manuscript to others with expertise. Revise the manuscript/product based on their comments. (Keeping a record of their comments is a good idea.)
- For **moderated blogs or newsletters**, blog or newsletter editors serve as technical reviewers before information is published. They must make sure that information is accurate and science-based, that controversial topics are handled appropriately and that authors and sources of information are appropriately referenced.
- **Translational products such as** publications or products that summarize, abstract or excerpt information from another (usually peer-reviewed) publication should clearly cite the information source. Ideally these translational products are sent to the original author for review.
- Any product that suggests a specific pesticide active ingredient (or trade name) for use on a specific crop or commodity or location site against a specific pest requires a **pesticide review**. Such publications must be reviewed by OPIC (ANR Office of Pesticide Information and Coordination) <http://ucanr.edu/survey/survey.cfm?surveynumber=8761>. Since it can take two weeks to get materials reviewed by OPIC, it is often best to refer readers to the already peer-reviewed UC IPM Pest Management Guidelines, Pest Notes, Tree and vine fungicide efficacy tables, or other publications already recently reviewed by OPIC or abstract information directly from those products at www.ipm.ucanr.edu.
- Products that include details of **specific regulations or how to meet regulatory requirements** need careful review to make sure details are correct to assure ANR's credibility and avoid liability. Review by appropriate

agencies may take substantial time. You can often avoid the need for agency or legal review by citing regulatory codes, copying (and citing) actual text from regulations or linking or referring to the agency web site. It is often wise to add a note: “Check with _____ agency for details. Local interpretations may vary.”

2. Issues & actions

1. When writing about **controversial topics**, acknowledge different points of view, but provide a non-advocate science-based approach. Always get someone else to review your work to be sure you have succeeded.
2. **What constitutes an expert** appropriate to do peer review? An appropriate reviewer is a colleague (within ANR or another university, agency or industry) who has a research or extension program related to the topic. For volunteer organizations such as Master Gardener or 4-H programs, newsletters, newspaper columns, leaflets and other *products that contain technical content* should be carefully reviewed by someone within ANR with expertise. Review by volunteers may not be sufficient.
3. **What should an ANR academic or staff employee do if they see factual errors or problems in an ANR newsletter, website, blog or other product?** The first step is to approach the individual personally and point out your concern. If that doesn't work or you feel uncomfortable approaching the individual, bring the issue to the attention of the Communication Services Advisory Board (CAB) chair. The CAB chair will consult with the Associate Editor chair and the Associate Editor (AE) in the appropriate subject area for fact finding with appropriate experts. If the concern seems sound, the AE and CAB Chair will contact the author and resolve the issue.
4. **What constitutes a “peer-reviewed” publication in your merit package?** You cannot list publications or products that undergo the informal types of peer review described here as “peer reviewed” in your merit package. Peer-reviewed publications must undergo a blind, formal peer review with chance of rejection that is supervised by an editor of a journal or through an ANR Associate Editor.
5. **For ANR volunteer organizations such as Master Gardeners, Master Food Preservers and 4-H,** we recommend that the coordinator of the program work with their County Director and an appropriate Advisor to develop written review guidelines for each type of product they disseminate to the public (e.g., web pages, blogs, leaflets, newsletters, newspaper articles) to assure technical accuracy and appropriateness as ANR products. These guidelines should be shared and approved by the appropriate Statewide Program Director before dissemination. The guidelines in this document should serve as a resource for that process. The County Director and supervising Advisor are responsible for the content and technical accuracy of material disseminated by each volunteer organization.

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