

A certificate of analysis (COA) that lists delta-9 THC but not THCA can leave shoppers with a basic question: is the product low in THC, or is the report simply missing part of the picture?

There isn't one answer. A delta-9-only COA may reflect the lab panel a brand ordered, the product's intended market, a familiar compliance practice, or a presentation choice. But delta-9 alone does not always tell you how much THC a product could contain after heating—or whether the report covers the compounds relevant to current or changing rules.

That distinction matters as policymakers revisit the federal hemp definition. Discussions in Congress and the White House about hemp-derived products can affect how "hemp" is defined, which THC measurements count, and what limits apply to finished products. Shoppers should look past a single number and check the batch, test method, analytes, and serving or container size.

What a Delta-9-Only COA Actually Shows

A COA is a laboratory report for a particular sample. Ideally, the sample is traceable to the product batch in your hand. A report showing delta-9 THC tells you what the lab measured for that specific compound, using the stated method and reporting limit. It does not automatically tell you how much THCA is present.

That gap can matter because THCA can convert to delta-9 THC when exposed to heat. A COA that reports delta-9 but omits THCA may therefore give an incomplete picture of the product's potential THC content, especially for flower, concentrates, and other products intended to be heated.

"Delta-9 only" describes the analytes displayed or tested; it does not prove that THCA is absent. Nor does a low or non-detectable delta-9 result prove that a product is THC-free. To support a "non-detectable" claim, a brand should identify the analyte, test method, and reporting limit. "Not listed" is not the same as "tested and not detected."

Delta-9 THC vs. Total THC

Delta-9 THC is one cannabinoid. Total THC is a calculated measure that commonly accounts for delta-9 THC and the delta-9 THC that could result from converting THCA. A frequently used calculation is:

$$\text{Total THC} = \text{delta-9 THC} + (\text{THCA} \times 0.877)$$

The 0.877 factor estimates the mass lost when THCA decarboxylates into delta-9 THC. A lab or regulator may use a specified method or calculation, so check the report and applicable rule rather than assuming every "total THC" figure was produced identically.

COA entry	What it tells you	What it does not tell you by itself
Delta-9 THC	The measured amount of delta-9 THC in the tested sample	How much THCA is present or the calculated total THC
THCA	The measured amount of tetrahydrocannabinolic acid	The exact amount of THC a consumer will absorb or experience
Total THC	A calculated or reported value that may account for THCA conversion	Whether the product meets every rule in every jurisdiction

In other words, a COA showing only delta-9 may be adequate for a narrow question—such as the measured delta-9 level—but inadequate for assessing total THC or a rule that counts THCA.

Why Some Brands Order or Publish Delta-9-Only Testing

They ordered a limited test panel

Laboratories offer different panels. A brand may request only certain cannabinoids, or may publish a summary that leaves out results included in the full report. Testing scope can vary by product type, cost, supplier, and the requirements the brand believes apply. That explains a missing THCA line; it does not make the missing information irrelevant.

They are following a familiar compliance convention

For years, many hemp businesses focused on delta-9 THC because it appeared prominently in the federal hemp definition and in familiar testing practices. Some brands still use reports designed around that older, narrower approach. But a convention is not a guarantee that the report answers today's legal or consumer-safety questions.

They want a simpler label story

Delta-9 is a familiar term, and a single number is easier to summarize in marketing than a panel of cannabinoids and a conversion calculation. That can make a report look reassuring while leaving shoppers unable to evaluate THCA or total THC. A short summary is not necessarily deceptive, but the complete, batch-specific COA should be accessible and understandable.

The product or market has different testing requirements

Testing expectations can differ across states, product categories, and sales channels. Requirements also change. A COA created for one market or purpose may not establish compliance somewhere else, and a product's format can affect which analytes are relevant. Ask what the report was usaenlinea.com intended to demonstrate instead of assuming one result settles every question.

THCA, Heating, and Labeling

THCA is the acidic precursor to delta-9 THC found naturally in cannabis plants. When heated, it can decarboxylate and form delta-9 THC. The theoretical conversion is not a promise of an exact amount in a real product: heating conditions, processing, storage, and the product matrix can all affect the outcome. Still, leaving THCA off a report prevents a shopper from seeing a key part of the calculation used for total THC.

Labels can add another layer of confusion. A product may be marketed as hemp-derived, "low THC," or "THC-free," while its COA lists only delta-9. Those phrases should be read carefully. "Hemp-derived" does not itself tell you the product's total THC, and "THC-free" should not be treated as proof of zero unless the company explains what was tested and what "free" means.

Look for the test result, units, sample identity, and reporting limit. Also check whether the label's serving size matches the COA's units. Percent by weight, milligrams per gram, milligrams per serving, and milligrams per container are not interchangeable without conversion.

How Federal Hemp Definition Changes Could Affect COAs

Federal hemp policy has been the subject of proposals and revisions, including debate in Congress and attention from the White House. The important consumer issue is not just whether a change is called a "hemp rewrite." It is what the language actually counts, what products it covers, and when any requirements take effect.

A shift from measuring delta-9 alone toward a total-THC approach would make THCA more consequential in compliance calculations. A rule may also define limits by product, serving, or package. That means a result

expressed as a percentage on a lab report may not answer whether a finished package meets a per-container limit.

One figure discussed in newer policy approaches is a cap of **0.4 milligrams of THC per container**. Do not assume that number applies universally or is already effective for every product. Confirm the current statutory text, implementation date, product scope, and relevant state rules. When a law or rule uses a per-container cap, the calculation generally requires understanding the amount in the whole package—not merely the amount per serving or the percentage in a small lab sample.

For brands, a delta-9-only COA may become less persuasive if the governing standard includes THCA or total THC. For shoppers, the practical takeaway is simple: a report should be detailed enough to evaluate the rule that applies to the product, not just the rule the brand chose to highlight.



How to Check a COA Before Buying

1. **Match the batch number.** Compare the lot or batch ID on the package with the ID on the COA. A report for a different batch is not proof about the product you are holding.

2. **Use the QR code COA lookup, then verify the report.** Scan the code and confirm it opens a full lab report—not just a marketing page. Check the product name, batch, lab, and test date.
3. **Look for both delta-9 and THCA.** If THCA is not listed, ask whether it was tested and whether the company can provide the complete report.
4. **Check for total THC and the calculation.** Find out whether total THC is reported directly or calculated, and what method or formula was used.
5. **Read the units and limits.** Note whether results are reported by weight, per serving, or per container. Look for the detection or quantitation limit before interpreting “ND” or “not detected.”
6. **Check the testing scope and lab identity.** Confirm which analytes were tested and whether the report identifies the laboratory and analytical method. A cannabinoid panel does not automatically demonstrate every kind of product testing.

If a QR code leads to a generic COA library, search for the exact batch. If the brand cannot connect the report to the package, the report’s relevance is uncertain. I always check the batch number before believing a label.

Questions Worth Asking a Brand

- Was THCA tested, even if it is not shown on the product page?
- Does the complete COA report total THC, or only delta-9 THC?
- What is the reporting limit for delta-9 and THCA?
- Is the COA tied to the batch number on this package?
- How does the company calculate milligrams per container from the lab result?
- Which current federal and state requirements does the company say apply to this product?

Established names such as Joy Organics may make COAs easy to find, but brand recognition is not a substitute for checking the report in front of you. Apply the same standard to any company: inspect the batch match, analyte list, and units instead of relying on a reputation or a broad “compliant” claim.

The Bottom Line

Some CBD brands show only delta-9 because they ordered a limited panel, rely on older testing conventions, tailor reports to a particular market, or choose to present a simpler summary. The missing THCA result does not prove a product is unsafe or out of compliance—but it does mean the report may not show the information needed to assess total THC.

As federal hemp definitions and product limits evolve, the distinction between delta-9-only testing and total THC compliance becomes more important. Check the batch-specific COA, confirm whether THCA is listed, and understand whether any limit applies per serving or per container. If a brand makes a strong THC claim but cannot explain the test method and reporting limit, treat that as a reason to ask more questions—not as proof of a clean result.