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OPERATOR GUIDE

The Payment-Approval Checklist

The boxes an underwriter actually ticks before a research-peptide store gets a merchant account. Payments are the long pole in this business: start here, not last.

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1 Before you apply

Every item below is verified during underwriting. A mismatch between any two of them is one of the most common reasons a file gets declined.

- [ ] Registered entity in good standing (LLC or corporation), with the certificate on hand
- [ ] IRS EIN letter, with the legal name matching the entity exactly
- [ ] Business bank account in the same legal name, at the same address
- [ ] Government photo ID and proof of residential address for every principal owning 25% or more
- [ ] Three months of business bank statements
- [ ] Three months of prior processing statements, if you have any history

> **Name, address, and ownership must agree across all six.** Underwriters cross-check them, and a typo in the entity name against the bank record reads as a red flag rather than a typo.

2 Documents specific to this category

These are the ones generic payment guides leave out, and the ones that decide a peptide file.

- [ ] Third-party Certificates of Analysis with assay data, purity, and molecular weight
- [ ] High-resolution images of your actual product labels
- [ ] Written Standard Operating Procedures for storage and handling
- [ ] Live website screenshots that include the checkout flow
- [ ] Terms of Service, Privacy Policy, and refund, return, shipping, and cancellation policies
- [ ] A written chargeback mitigation plan

> The chargeback plan is the one most founders skip. Underwriters read it as evidence you understand the risk they are taking on, so a specific one-page plan outperforms a generic template.

3 What your storefront has to show

Underwriters open your site and look for these before they read anything else. Missing controls here sink otherwise clean applications.

- [ ] Research-use-only positioning, stated plainly and consistently
- [ ] "Not for human consumption" labeling on products and product pages
- [ ] Age verification before purchase
- [ ] Restricted-jurisdiction blocking enforced at checkout, not just stated in a policy page
- [ ] A Certificate of Analysis accessible from every product
- [ ] Accurate pricing, with no medical, therapeutic, or human-use claims anywhere on the site
- [ ] Working contact information and responsive support
- [ ] A per-order audit trail recording the research-use acknowledgment with a timestamp

> One claim on one product page can undo the rest. Marketing copy is part of the underwriting file, not separate from it.

4 The ratios that fine you

Approval is not the finish line. Both card networks fine merchants who exceed dispute thresholds, and the thresholds tightened in 2026.

PROGRAM	TRIGGER	PENALTY
Visa VAMP from 1 Apr 2026	Combined fraud and dispute ratio at or above 1.5%, with 1,500+ combined monthly transactions	$8 per violation transaction, after a three-month first-violation grace period
Mastercard ECM	100+ monthly chargebacks and a ratio at or above 1.5% for two consecutive months	Escalating monthly: $1K → $5K → $25K → $50K → $100K
Mastercard HECM	300+ monthly chargebacks and a ratio at or above 3.0%	Escalating monthly, up to $200K

> **Disputes resolved through RDR, CDRN, or Compelling Evidence 3.0 are excluded from the VAMP ratio entirely.** Enrolling in those tools is not general good practice, it directly changes the number that determines whether you get fined. Treat enrollment as part of launch, not a later optimization.

5 Never run on one processor

Approval can be withdrawn. The only reliable continuity strategy is redundancy arranged before you need it, because underwriting a replacement takes weeks you will not have.

- [ ] **Primary.** Card processing at one acquirer, fully underwritten and active
- [ ] **Backup.** A second card account at a *different* acquirer, underwritten and approved but dormant, ready to activate
- [ ] **Fallback.** An ACH or eCheck rail through an ISO with banking relationships in this vertical

> Expect a rolling reserve of roughly 5% to 15% of daily batches held 90 to 180 days, and discount rates well above standard retail. Reserves are renegotiable once you have clean processing history, so ask again at six and twelve months.

6 What gets you declined

- ✕ Building on an aggregator that prohibits the category. Stripe, PayPal, Square, and Shopify Payments approve automatically, then terminate when the review catches up, with funds held afterward.
- ✕ Any medical, therapeutic, dosing, or human-use claim, including in blog posts and email.
- ✕ A third party sitting between you and your money as merchant of record.
- ✕ Mismatched entity, bank, and website details.
- ✕ No plan for disputes.

> Termination for cause can place your business on the MATCH list, which blocks most acquiring relationships for five years. Avoiding that outcome is the single strongest argument for doing the work in this checklist before you take a first order.

7 Confirm these with your acquirer

Genuinely unsettled at the time of writing. Anyone stating these as fact is guessing, so ask your acquiring bank directly rather than relying on any guide, including this one.

- ? **Your MCC.** No card-network primary source confirms the correct merchant category code for research-use-only sellers. It affects your fees, your monitoring thresholds, and your stability, so get it in writing.
- ? **LegitScript.** Industry sources expect it to become mandatory for peptide-adjacent merchants; no network has published that requirement. Ask whether your acquirer will require it, and when.
- ? **Which ODFI backs your ACH rail.** Nacha rules do not prohibit these transactions, but individual originating banks still decline. Ask which bank stands behind the ISO before you rely on it.