



National Conference on Weights and Measures
"That Equity May Prevail"

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CONTACT: Don Onwiler, Executive Director (402) 434-4880 or don.onwiler@ncwm.net

Getting Full Value for your Easter Dinner

As shoppers head to the store to stock up for the big Easter dinner, there are some simple things they can do to protect their pocketbook. Many of the items we buy are weighed across a scale, and the scales are inspected and tested for accuracy. Still, there is a possibility that the consumer is not getting what they pay for at the check stand or deli.

Every state has a government agency charged with protecting the interest of the buyer and the seller for all things sold by weight, measure or count. In some states, there are also county or city officials to carry out the duties. They inspect scales, gas pumps, taxi meters, net contents of packaged goods, fuel quality and much more. Even with these assurances, consumers should implement some basic habits in their shopping routine.

Make sure the scale display reads zero before your items are weighed. Laws require that a scale display be visible to the consumer. If it's not, ask the store clerk to reposition it. Often it is part of the display on a computer monitor, making it very visible. If the scale does not read zero, ask the clerk to correct it before weighing your items.

Watch the weighing process to make sure the store clerk's hands and any other items are not touching the scale or the items on the scale during the weighment. Busy clerks can make these mistakes unintentionally. Don't be afraid to ask the clerk to put something back on the scale if you see a problem.

For items being weighed that have wrapping or that you have placed in bags such as candies, produce or coffee, observe the weight that is displayed. This will be the "gross" weight which includes the weight of the packaging. After the purchase, check the weight on the receipt. This will be the "net" weight which is the weight of the product with the weight of the packaging deducted. If the weight on the receipt is still the gross weight, ask the clerk or a supervisor to weigh it again and deduct the tare weight for the packaging.

For the most part, those beautiful hams and other meats, fish and poultry are already labeled with a net weight. It is good practice when going through the check stand to ask the clerk to place the package on the scale. The displayed gross weight should be more than the printed net weight on the label. If not, you will be overpaying. With the prices of meats, the amount can be significant.

If you observe these common problems, always address it with the store first. You can also notify your weights and measures authority. They are very responsive to consumer complaints and will assist the store in regaining compliance. The contact information for the state directors of weights and measures is available on the National Conference on Weights and Measures website.

The National Conference on Weights and Measures is a professional nonprofit association of state and local weights and measures officials, manufacturers, retailers and consumers. In 1905, NCWM was formed to develop model standards for uniform enforcement from city to city and state to state. The organization has set the example for bringing the right interests to the table to develop and amend national standards to keep pace with innovative advancements in the marketplace.

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