

Los Angeles County Department of
Agricultural Commissioner / Weights and Measures

:: NEWS BULLETIN ::

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**LOS ANGELES COUNTY OBSERVES NATIONAL WEIGHTS AND MEASURES WEEK,
MARCH 1-7, 2005**

***Consumers Reminded:
Pay By Weight of Product, Not Packaging***

ARCADIA - National Weights and Measures Week is being observed March 1-7 by state and local jurisdictions throughout the United States. The occasion marks the 106th anniversary of the nation's first weights and measures law, passed by the Congress of the United States on March 2, 1799.

The theme of the County's observance this year is:

“Be Alert – Pay for Product, Not Packaging”

“Often, consumers are unaware that sales of product over a scale - by the pound, ounce, or gram - must be based solely upon the weight of the actual product being purchased, excluding any packaging, wrapping, or labels,” says Kurt E. Floren, Agricultural Commissioner / Director of Weights and Measures. The term “tare” includes paper wrappers, bags, styrofoam cups, plastic containers, or similar items used to wrap or contain a product. Vendors must deduct the weight of tare material and calculate charges based only on the net weight of the product.

Director Floren adds, “Our agency routinely conducts undercover retail purchases to monitor and ensure that retail store personnel charge the public correctly for weighed products such as meat, seafood, deli, and many non-food items.” During undercover test purchases at some stores, overcharges occur due to failure to deduct tare weight. Common overcharges involve bulk coffee placed into heavy foil-lined bags and deli items placed into plastic “clamshell” containers.

Consumers should be attentive during checkout to ensure that store employees either manually or electronically deduct the weight of packaging. On a purchase of one pound of bulk coffee at \$9.99 per pound, a consumer could be overcharged 30 cents or more for the weight of the bag. As the per-pound price goes up, such as purchases involving expensive seafood items, the potential overcharge increases.

Consumers with complaints or questions about retail stores may call 1-800-665-2900 or may file a complaint online at the department's website: <http://acwm.co.la.ca.us>.