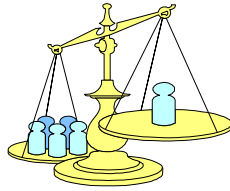


# SPOTLIGHT ON WEIGHTS & MEASURES

## SONOMA COUNTY SEALER OF WEIGHTS AND MEASURES



John Westoby  
Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer  
2688 Ventura Ave, Santa Rosa, CA 95403  
[http://www.Sonoma-county.org/agcomm/weights\\_measures](http://www.Sonoma-county.org/agcomm/weights_measures)

Mark Hanson  
Chief Deputy Sealer  
Phone (707) 565-2548

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Editor D. Keller

### **AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER'S & WEIGHTS AND MEASURES OFFICES ARE MOVING NOVEMBER 3**

After more than 30 years at the same location, The Agricultural Commissioner's and Weights and Measures Offices will be moving on November 3, 2003, to their new facility at 133 Aviation Boulevard, Suite 110, Santa Rosa, 95403 (Airport Area). The new phone number for Weights and Measures will be 707-565-2371 and the new fax number will be 707-565-3850.

### **WEIGHING AND MEASURING DEVICES**

The inspectors spent much of their time in September testing large dormant scales at wineries. Dormant scales have capacities between 1,000 and 10,000 lbs. and are usually loaded with a forklift or overhead crane. There is always a last minute rush in the season to complete testing these scales before the crush. The weight of the grapes determines the amount of payment to the grower, harvest worker, and buyer. The accuracy tolerance for these scales is one pound per thousand. There were 76 dormant scales tested with 88% compliance. Three truck scales were also tested in September. A truck scale weighs gross capacities up to 80,000 lbs. The

cargo does not have to be unloaded to be weighed, as with a dormant scale. The truck

and trailer hauling the cargo are weighed before any cargo is loaded. This is the tare weight. Gross weight minus the tare weight equals the net weight.

One hundred fifty-four gas station dispensers were also tested found accurate. Four complaints came into the office in September, none were verified. Many times complainants call in and are sure that they have pumped more gas into their tank than possible. They go by their gas gage or odometer. This is not a precise means of determining whether the dispensers are accurate. Vehicle fuel gages are not always accurate. Also, many factors can come into play when comparing mileage and gas gages. We have seen greater compliance in retail fuel meter compliance because many gas stations have a maintenance agreement with a service agent who checks their dispensers for accuracy, wearing of parts, etc. The newer electronics used in these devices are extremely accurate. This does not mean, however there cannot be a problem found at the dispenser. Meters do fail to pass inspection. Consumers should always call to report a suspect meter.

There was a complaint regarding a water dispenser delivering short measure to a

## **WEIGHING AND MEASURING DEVICES CONTINUED**

customer. The complainant stated that they received only approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a gallon of water. The inspector tested the dispenser and confirmed the complaint. The dispenser was placed out of order and red tagged.

## **QUANTITY CONTROL**

Sonoma County received \$2,363 in a civil complaint settlement with Albertson's. Sonoma County was not the lead county in this suit but had some investigative time and hours spent in looking into the complaint. The Sonoma County Albertson Stores were found in compliance when the audits were done.

A settlement was agreed upon in a fertilizer investigation, which comprised 9 counties and the state Division of Measurement Standards involved. The settlement was reached for \$1.5 million. Sonoma County checked the fertilizer in three different locations and placed several hundred bags of fertilizer off sale for being short weight. Sonoma County will receive \$5,000.00 and some additional equipment for our quantity control program.

Two firewood complaints were received and both complaints were verified. The firewood received was found short measure of what the customers had ordered. One of the complaints concerned short measure in a purchase of two cords of firewood. When the respondent was notified of the shortage, he became extremely agitated and ordered the inspectors off his property. The seller had not issued a receipt to the complainant with the required information of name, phone number, type of wood, quantity sold, and price. The inspectors left the property and returned to the office to find out the complainant had

called to say the respondent dropped off additional firewood to him. The seller was sent a copy of the requirements he must follow.

## **CONSUMER CORNER**

Q: What about metric?

A: You probably have noticed that most packages now have dual quantity statements. This is now part of the state's labeling requirements. You will notice the quantity in inch-pound units and then in SI(metric) units. Basic units are as follows: Meter: a little longer than a yard (about 1.1 yards); Liter: a little larger than a quart (about 1.06 quarts); Gram: a little more than the weight of a paper clip. About 50% of your money is spent on goods or services involving weights and measures. It is good business to get the most out of your money. Become acquainted with the metric system.

## **CONSUMER TIP**

Read the package!!! By making price comparisons, you can save yourself and your family a lot of money. The net weight on the package will tell you exactly how much you are getting for your dollar. Watch for "large" size, "jumbo" size, and "family size". These tell you nothing! Check the quantity declaration to determine the best buy.