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MEDIA RELEASE
 STATE OF TENNESSEE
 DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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CONTACT: Tom Womack
(615) 837-5118 (office)
Tom.Womack@State.TN.US
RETURN TO NEWSROOM

 Media Contact, Tom Womack, PIO
 Tenn. Dept. of Agriculture
 Ellington Ag Center, Nashville, TN 37204
 (615) 837-5118, Fax: (615) 837-5333
Tom.Womack@state.tn.us
National Weights & Measures Week March 1-7
More than 200 Years of Equity in the Marketplace

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Congress was given the power to “fix weights and measures standards” in Articles of Confederation and Article 8 of the U.S. Constitution. President John Adams signed into law the first federal weights and measures act on March 2, 1799.

In 1870, Tennessee’s first state weights and measures law was enacted, and for more than 100 years the Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA) has been minding the store – making sure that the products you buy weigh, hold or measure what they should.

State Agriculture officials are joining the National Conference on Weights and Measures (NCWM) in recognizing National Weights & Measures Week, Mar. 1 -7, to remind consumers and businesses of the importance of equity in the marketplace.

TDA weights and measures officials are there everyday in most every transaction from grocery and home heating fuel purchases to department stores and gas stations.

“Our weights and measures inspectors play an important part in our economy and system of commerce by protecting both the consumer and the merchant,” said state Agriculture Commissioner Ken Givens. “Everyone has a direct financial stake in knowing that all transactions are fair.”

The goal of Weights and Measures Week is to build awareness among consumers and businesses of their role in commerce and to recognize the important community service performed by our standards officials.

“Consumers in Tennessee are protected by our weights and measures inspectors regardless of whether they are purchasing five gallons of milk, 10 gallons of gasoline or a ton of gravel,” said Givens.

Tennessee, like many other states, partners with the NCWM to create fair and equitable national standards. State weights and measures officials ensure that these standards are met by conducting inspections of weighing and measuring devices at various establishments across the state. Officials also help ensure that products and services sold by weight or measure comply with state laws by conducting random price verification and net weight inspections.

“These unannounced inspections protect both the consumer and industry as witnessed by the near 97 percent compliance rate on almost 85,000 motor fuel pumps and approximately 94 percent compliance on more than 16,500 scales inspected yearly in Tennessee,” said TDA Weights and Measures administrator Bob Williams.

According to Williams, about 96 percent of products checked for price accuracy and 92 percent of products tested for accurate net weight or measure are found to be in compliance.

“We want consumers to know and understand that they have an important role to play too by observing basic practices when making a purchase involving weights and measures.” Williams suggests that consumers:

1. Check that pumps and scales always begin on zero prior to the start of their transaction,
2. Note that all packaged commodities should clearly state the net quantity (ounces, pounds, quarts, liters, etc) on the package, and
3. Pay attention to the price of items being scanned to ensure pricing accuracy.

If you note a problem, Williams says to first talk with store personnel and give them a chance to correct the problem. If the problem is not explained or corrected to your satisfaction, you should immediately contact the state Weights and Measures office to provide a detailed explanation of the issue. Following the completion of an inspection, the Weights and Measures office will provide a report of their findings upon request.

For more information or to register a weights and measures complaint, consumers can contact the Tennessee Department of Agriculture at (615) 837-5109 (local) or toll-free at 1-800-628-2631, or visit TDA online at www.tennessee.gov/agriculture.

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Department of Agriculture
Ellington Agricultural Center
Nashville, TN 37204
615.837.5103