

MEDIA Release

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Iowans Should be Wary of Door-to-Door Meat Sales

DES MOINES, IOWA (July 29, 2015) – Iowans should be wary of individuals selling products door-to-door, especially those selling meat and meat products. The Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals' (DIA) Food & Consumer Safety Bureau recently has received several inquiries from individuals questioning whether meat and meat products may be sold from the back of trucks directly to the at-home consumer.

"The Department has been contacted by individuals in northwest, east central, and southern Iowa who have been approached by vendors going door-to-door offering meat and meat products for sale," DIA Chief Food Inspector Mark Speltz said.

Door-to-door sales of foods, including meat products are permitted provided the vendor is appropriately licensed and the product is clearly marked, Speltz explained. In Iowa, door-to-door vendors must have a mobile food license for their trucks and consumers should ask to see it, he added.

Consumers should never purchase any retail food or food products from a vendor who does not have the appropriate license, with the exception of fruit and vegetable stands that dot the Iowa countryside during the summer and fall months. The sale of raw agricultural products, such as sweet corn and tomatoes, is not regulated by the Department, Speltz clarified.

If the offered item is a meat or meat product it must bear either an Iowa mark of inspection or the circular mark of inspection issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. "Iowans should never purchase meat or meat products from a door-to-door salesperson unless it has the mark of inspection," Speltz continued. "Unmarked or unlabeled products should always be avoided."

Prior to making any purchase of a packaged food item, it is important to carefully review the product label to make sure the name and address of the distributor or producer is clearly identified. Additionally, consumers should make sure the product label contains a statement of identity, the net weight of the product, an ingredient statement if more than one ingredient is contained in the package, and – in the case of meats and meat products – the mark of inspection.

"Any product that does not contain the proper labeling information should be avoided," the inspector added.

While there are several major companies that specialize in door-to-door sales of foods and food items, not all vendors should be trusted. These national companies are very careful to

ensure that their trucks are appropriately licensed and the foods offered are safe and wholesome.

However, it now appears that there may be some unlicensed operators who are going door-to-door and offering meat and meat products to lowans. “Before purchasing any product from a vendor, always make sure the individual is appropriately licensed and offering fully labeled or marked food,” the inspector concluded.

In addition to licensing and food quality issues, lowans should also be aware of consumer protection issues involving door-to-door sales of meat or seafood. “For example, be leery when a sales person claims that he or she is offering you huge savings because another customer backed out of a sale or there’s a surplus on the truck,” Geoff Greenwood, Communications Director for the Office of the Iowa Attorney General, said. “lowans should get a written copy of the sale agreement and do have a cancellation window.”

Iowa's Door-to-Door Sales Act protects consumers for purchases of \$25 or more made at a place other than the seller's normal place of business -- at a consumer's door, for example, or at a tent sale, hotel conference, fairgrounds, etc. (The law does not apply to sales at stores.)

Buyers have a right to cancel within three business days and receive a full refund within ten business days of the business receiving the cancellation notice.

Sellers also must orally inform buyers of their right to cancel at the time of the sale, must provide two copies of the notice of the buyer's right to cancel, and must provide a receipt or copy of any contract pertaining to a door-to-door sale.

lowans who have questions about the door-to-door sale of foods should contact the Department’s Food & Consumer Safety Bureau (515-281-6538) to verify whether the vendor is appropriately licensed. Consumers also may check a vendor’s license status by visiting the Bureau’s online inspection website – <https://food.iowa.gov>.

lowans with consumer protection complaints can contact the Consumer Protection Division of the Attorney General’s Office by email at consumer@iowa.gov, or by calling 515-281-5926 or 888-777-4590 (toll-free, outside of the Des Moines metro area only).