



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE**

CINDY HYDE-SMITH
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

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MS Dept. of Agriculture's Focus on Consumer Protection Heightened This Holiday Season

With the holiday season approaching, many Mississippians will be buying turkeys, hams, and other meat products for celebrations with their families. Due to the season, the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce usually sees an increase in "door-to-door" meat sales. The Department recommends that a consumer ask questions of door-to-door meat vendors to ensure that the consumer is getting a safe meat product. "One way to confirm the vendor is legitimate is to ask to see his or her retail food mobile establishment license from the Department," advised Cindy Hyde-Smith, Commissioner. "If a vendor has a current license," Hyde-Smith said, "then they have been required to meet certain sanitation regulations required by the Department."

In addition to asking to see an up-to-date license, the Department recommends these tips for consumers when approached by a door-to-door meat vendor:

- Read the label on the package before you buy. If there is no inspection legend, either by the United States Department of Agriculture or the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce, then the product has not been inspected as required by law.
- If the establishment number where the meat or poultry was inspected is not on the product, then question the salesperson about that. The inspection legend must contain the establishment number.
- Confirm that the product is being transported in a refrigerated vehicle. Meat and poultry products for sale by mobile vendors must be sold from a refrigerated vehicle and not from a cooler contained in the vehicle.

Recently, thanks to an attentive consumer, the Department investigated a door-to-door mobile vendor selling hams without a license in the Brookhaven area. The mobile vendor was selling adulterated hams and had forged the Department's mark of inspection on the hams. The Department fined the vendor \$5,600.00 for multiple violations of the law. "While food safety inspectors from the Department are working every day to maintain a safe food supply for Mississippians, consumer tips, like this one from Brookhaven, are a very essential component to ensuring food safety," said Julie McLemore, Director of the Department's Bureau of Regulatory Services. Please contact the Department's Consumer Protection Division if you have a concern about a door-to-door vendor at 601-359-1148.

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