



## Vendor Scales at Farmers Markets

Farmers market shoppers' trust is vital to all farmers markets. This means trusting that they are charged the correct price and given the correct change. This is sometimes challenging given the changing signage, the fast pace of transactions at markets, paying cash in combination with other currencies, and using a cash box instead of a cash register with receipts.

Three things every market manager can do to ensure shoppers trust their purchases are:

1. Verify that vendors have a Scale License;
2. Verify that the scale being used has a certificate of compliance;
3. Verify that they are using a certified scale that has been inspected.

The WSDA Weights and Measures Program has a great 2-page brochure on "Vendor Scales at Farmers Markets." [Vendor Scales at Farmers Market Brochure-WSDA 2017](#) It was updated in 2017 and includes:

- Market Manager Responsibilities
- Vendor Responsibilities
- Weights and Measures Inspector Responsibilities

Vendors are responsible for the following, but would likely benefit from your reminders:

- Scales must be positioned so customers can observe the weighing operation and the weight displayed.
- All sales must be conducted using net weight. Net weight means the weight of the product only, excluding the wrapper, labeling, and container weight.
- All prepackaged products require a label identifying the product and the net weight. If the product is packaged off-site, you must indicate the name and address of

You can also contact WSDA Weights and Measures Program at [wtsmeasures@agr.wa.gov](mailto:wtsmeasures@agr.wa.gov) or (360) 902-1822. (The phone number listed on the brochure is no longer in service.). They also have a website: <https://agr.wa.gov/services/inspections-and-investigations/inspections/weights-and-measures>

# 1. Scale License

Any vendor who charges shoppers based on the weight of a product is required to have a “Weighing and Measuring Devices Addendum” to their Washington State Business License. In the farmers market world, this is usually called a “Scale License.” And in the State of Washington Business Licensing Service world, this is called an “Specialty Endorsement.”

*This means that any farmer or other vendor who puts their products on a scale to figure out a price, must have a Business License and Scale Endorsement from the State of Washington.*

You can verify that a vendor has a scale license by using the Department of Revenue “[Business Lookup](#)” search. Enter the vendor’s UBI number in the search box. The vendor business information will show up.

- It may take up to a week for updated information to be visible on the Business Lookup website.
- It is better to use the UBI number than the farm or business name to look up a vendor. A business will have one UBI number whereas it may go by various names.

Once you find the UBI number, look for a table called **Endorsements**. In that table, look for “Scale-Small” to be listed. Small scales weigh up to 400 pounds. If it is not listed, contact vendor to find out what the status is.

Example of a list of Endorsements as it appears with Business license information in the DOR Business Lookup.

<b>Excise tax and reseller permit status:</b>		<a href="#">Click here</a>				
<b>Secretary of State status:</b>		<a href="#">Click here</a>				
<b>Endorsements</b>						
Endorsements held at this location	License #	Count	Details	Status	Expiration date	First issuance date
Minor Work Permit				Active	May-31-2022	Jun-07-2002
Nursery Retailer				Active	May-31-2022	Apr-21-2017
Scale - Intermediate		1		Active	May-31-2022	Apr-21-2017
Scale - Small		14		Active	May-31-2022	Oct-16-1998

If you look up the UBI number that a vendor provided to you and the license record does not show a “Scale-Small” endorsement, then ask the vendor if they have it and to provide documentation.

Help problem solve. Share the WSDA's Vendor Scale brochure to help educate vendors and market staff. If a vendor needs to update (or get) their scale license, recommend that they call the State of Washington Business Licensing Service at (360) 705-6741. In 2021, the cost was \$16 for the Small - Scale endorsement plus a \$19.00 processing fee if they are adding it to an existing business license.

- Form needed: BLS-700 341
- Direct link: <https://bls.dor.wa.gov/forms/700341.pdf>

## 2. Scale Compliance

The vendor must use the right kind of scale – one that has a certificate of compliance. Portion scales and scales displaying “not legal for trade” are not suitable for sales.

- There is a website where you can look up scales to make sure they are approved: <https://www.ncwm.com/ntep-certificates>
- If you wish to purchase a scale online, please be sure to review this document from the Weights & Measures department first: <https://cms.agr.wa.gov/WSDAKentico/Imported/BuyingScalesOnline.pdf?/BuyingScalesOnline.pdf>
- A “Service Agent” is needed to place new scales into service. A list of service agents can be found at <https://cms.agr.wa.gov/WSDAKentico/Documents/PP/WeightsAndMeasures/ServiceAgent-2021LicensedStatusReport.pdf>

## 3. Scale Inspections



Scales used at farmers should be inspected by the State of Washington's inspectors annually to ensure that they are working and reading properly (calibrated). Some farmers markets have invited scale inspectors to their vendor meetings (or other events) so that everyone has an easy way of taking care of this task.

The state inspectors will not do any adjustments or repairs to the scales, but can point the owner of the scale in the direction of an independent company (“service agent”) who is certified to complete the repairs. A list of service agents can be found at <https://cms.agr.wa.gov/WSDAKentico/Documents/PP/WeightsAndMeasures/ServiceAgent-2021LicensedStatusReport.pdf>.

Once a scale has passed an inspection, the inspector will issue a sticker that is placed on the scale stating that it is working properly and calibrated (within tolerance). This inspection sticker indicates to customers that the scale is working correctly and they are being charged accurately based on the weight of what they are purchasing. The inspection sticker will bear the State Seal and say “Tested and Approved” along with the month and year that the scale was inspected.

The cost for having the state inspect a small scale (“zero to four hundred pounds capacity”) is \$16.80 per scale (WAC 16-675-055). To request that your scales be inspected by the State, please call or email Karen Sanders at 360-902-1857 or [ksanders@agr.wa.gov](mailto:ksanders@agr.wa.gov).

## Suggested Farmers Market Practices

[ ] Ask all potential vendors in the Farmers Market application if they have a current Washington State Business License.

[ ] Ask potential vendors if they are planning to sell by weight. If YES, then ask if they have a “Weighing and Measuring Devices Addendum” specialty endorsement for small scales.

[ ] Do a “desk audit” by looking up a vendor in the Department of Revenue Business Lookup (using their UBI number) to verify their scale license.

[ ] Invite a Weights and Measures Inspector to your vendor meeting and/or have someone come who can inspect vendors’ scales during the vendor meeting. Any other occasion when vendors are gathered will work. This saves them time and helps ensure happy compliance.

[ ] Randomly test your vendors’ scales during a market day. For best results, please let your vendors know at the beginning of the season that you have this right and may do so in order to ensure your market integrity and shopper confidence.

[ ] Check to see if your market has any sort of issue or irregularities by sending out a secret shopper to make sure prices, weights and change were correct. If an opportunity for improvement is noted, then a “unscheduled test” may be helpful. It is important to be fair to all vendors and give them an equal opportunity to demonstrate their compliance.