

Protecting Wisconsin Consumers for 75 Years

Door-to-door food plans

The Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection has an alert about door-to-door meat salespeople and home food service plans.

While some of these food companies provide a valuable service to their customers, a number of them have misled consumers and may sell food at two or three times the price found in local stores.

In the case of door-to-door meat sellers, they have used these untrue sale pitches:

- “A restaurant refused the order and I cannot take this meat back; it is yours wholesale.”
- “My truck is broken down at the truck stop and I have to sell this meat now.”

Sometimes these untrue statements are broadcast in radio commercials and attract hundreds of buyers looking for a bargain.

Peddlers often say the meat is “restaurant quality.” Consumers should know that “restaurant quality” does not mean the meat is USDA Prime or USDA Choice – the higher grades for quality given by the federal government. The meat is inspected at the packing plant for wholesomeness

by the USDA and may be used from these sellers by some restaurants, but this is no assurance of quality. Meat can be wholesome but at the same time be of low quality. Some consumers say that after removing the meat from the plastic wrap, it appears to be thinly sliced. Some cuts are so thin they may burn up on the barbecue grill.

Sellers may not give price per pound. When consumers are not told price per pound, it becomes difficult for them to compare it in cost with meat sold locally in grocery stores. After one salesman left, a consumer found out that they were charged over four times what it would have cost at their local store.

Food service plans deliver food to families on a regular basis and often provide a freezer.

Some representatives say the food they provide costs about the same, or a little more, than food purchased in grocery stores. However, it can cost twice as much. Consumers have complained about quality and say they were not told price per pound.

If consumers do not know price per pound, it will be hard to tell what kind of deal they are getting.

People purchasing food service plans often are signed up for finance plans. This means that families are paying for food on time and paying interest. Later, consumers ask themselves why they are buying food on time when it is available at the grocery store in smaller, fresher quantities that can be purchased without going into debt.

Consumers are vulnerable in their homes because sales people may take advantage of their hospitality. Our advice:

- Always ask for price per pound and compare with food advertised in the paper.
- Ask yourself if you really want to go into debt to buy food.
- Never buy without getting a receipt with the company’s name and address.
- If your transaction is over \$25 or involves credit, make sure the seller provides you with two copies of your Three Day Right to Cancel.

- Ask about the USDA grade of meat. If it is ungraded, you have no way of determining quality.
- Ask to see the Food seller's license from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.
 - Call the police if the seller has no permit
 - and call the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection at 800-422-7128.

For more information or to file a complaint, visit our website or contact the Bureau of Consumer Protection.

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