



Washington State Department of Agriculture

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Summer enforcement of WSDA agricultural dealer licenses under way *Investigators to visit commodity dealers—check current license status*

OLYMPIA – Each year, [the Washington State Department of Agriculture](#) (WSDA) receives numerous reports of farmers cheated out of money owed to them, often by unlicensed commodity dealers. To combat this type of fraud, and ensure a level playing field for dealers following the rules, WSDA's Agricultural Investigations Program is conducting a special enforcement effort this summer.

Beginning in June and through September, investigators with WSDA's [Agricultural Investigations Program](#) will visit roadside produce stands to ensure sellers are properly licensed. In addition, the program plans to establish checkpoints during the summer months along U.S. 12 and other highways to ensure vehicles transporting agricultural products are licensed and carrying required inspection, animal health or ownership documents.

In Washington, anyone buying agricultural commodities, including produce, seeds, hay and livestock, for resale must hold a WSDA license.

"A key provision of the licensing process is a requirement for dealers to be bonded, which provides protection to farmers," said Jerry Buendel, program manager for Agricultural Investigations.

Growers can visit www.agr.wa.gov/Inspection/CommissionMerchants to review the lists of properly licensed dealers. Farmers are encouraged to check whether the dealer they plan to do business with is licensed before entering into an agreement or giving up possession of their crops. Investigators also suggest that farmers review contracts carefully, save the paperwork and make sure they have the full name, address, phone number and vehicle license tag numbers of dealers with whom they do business.

"If producers have a complaint they should contact us as soon as possible," Buendel said. "During this enforcement emphasis, our investigators will work to bring dealers into compliance by having them licensed and bonded. "

WSDA licenses about 750 commission merchants, dealers, brokers and cash buyers of agricultural commodities. The license fees help cover the costs of investigations and refunds to farmers not paid according to contracts.

Programs for agricultural investigations and weights and measures inspections are two of several consumer protection programs at WSDA. Both programs are managed in the agency's Plant Protection Division.

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