

I like to tell people that the work we do impacts every resident of this state every day. A case in point is our inspection of weights and measures devices such as scales and price scanners in retail locations.

These inspections fall under our Standards Division, which works to ensure fairness in trade through the accuracy of weights and measurement tools. Two areas that affect probably every resident is in checking price scanners and gas pumps for accuracy.

With gas pumps we want to help ensure that if consumers are pumping a gallon of gas that they are getting a gallon of gas. Gas pumps are routinely inspected, and you will find a sticker on the pump with the department's name and the month of the last inspection.

In retail stores, Standards inspectors are checking the accuracy of price scanners between what is advertised on the shelf and what it rings up at the register.

They also inspect the scales used to determine the weight of some items in the store. For example, deli meats and cheeses, produce or seafood sold by the pound.

Over the past six months our inspectors have started seeing an increase in price scanner errors, likely associated with ongoing staffing shortages business everywhere are facing. Seeing this uptick serves as a good reminder that we all need to be smart consumers when we shop and be aware of the prices advertised and compare them to what rings up at the checkout register.

If you find an error, you can report it to a manager so they can quickly correct the issue for you. In my experience, stores want to have accurate prices posted and ringing up at checkout, but with weekly sales and specials, sometimes price changes are missed.

It is easy to see what a big job it is to make the changes on the shelf and in the software for check out. Staffing shortages only add to the challenge, but it doesn't remove a store's responsibility to sell items for the advertised price.

Price scanner errors can add up for consumers so that's why inspections are important and why consumers should pay attention, too. Price scanner error complaints can also be made by calling the Standards Division at 984-236-4750.

I am proud of the work of our Standards Division staff because they are helping to safeguard our wallets, something I think everyone will appreciate.

There is a lot of information in this month's newspaper and I hope you will take the time to see what is going on across the state. You will find information on stores that have paid fines for price scanning errors on pages 4 and 5 and we have included an article on page 3 about the benefits of prescribed burns in managing wildfire risks. I think you will find it interesting as it provides some insights into the Grindstone Fire on Pilot Mountain in November last year.

If you are poultry farmer or have backyard birds, be sure to look at the information on page 2 announcing the suspension of poultry shows and sales. This includes all exhibitions, farm tours, shows, sales, flea markets, auction markets, swaps and meets pertaining to poultry and feathered fowl in North Carolina.

It is important that we all do our part to limit the spread of high path avian influenza that has been found in the state.

And finally, be sure to check out the information on the Got to Be NC Festival that runs May 20-22 at the State Fairgrounds in Raleigh. Better yet, put the date on your calendar and come see us!