

Hong Kong Customs combats supply of short-weight food

Hong Kong Customs conducted a territory-wide spot check operation codenamed "Moon Rabbit" between August 19 and September 6 to combat violation of the Weights and Measures Ordinance (WMO) by restaurants, seafood stalls and fruit retailers. Eleven suspected cases were detected as a result.

During the operation, 17 restaurants, 24 seafood stalls and 56 fruit retail shops were checked.

Among the 11 cases of suspected violations, four cases involved restaurants and four others involved seafood stalls. Two other cases involved fruit retail shops and one case involving pre-packed frozen pork products was also handled.

In one of the four cases involving restaurants, Customs officers conducted a test-buy operation at a seafood restaurant in To Kwa Wan. A lobster with a claimed weight of 50 taels was bought for stay-in consumption. A subsequent check revealed that it was 16.9 taels short-weighted, or 33.8 per cent less.

In one of the four cases involving seafood stalls, Customs officers conducted a test-buy operation at a stall in Cheung Sha Wan and tried to buy a catty of sea shrimp. The stall operator claimed that the weight of the sea shrimp was 16 taels. Afterwards, a check revealed that it was in short of 0.35 tael or 2.2 per cent. Furthermore, the weighting scale reading side was found to face inward to the shop, making it difficult for consumers to have a clear view.

In one of the two cases involving fruit retail shops, Customs officers conducted a test-buy operation against an operator in Wan Chai and bought two pounds of cherries. The shop asked for a price of 33.78 ounces. An initial check indicated that the cherry bought weighed 28.6 ounces, which was in short of 5.18 ounces or 15.3 per cent.

With regard to the case of the frozen meat shop, Customs officers seized 146 packs of pre-packed frozen pork products in Ma On Shan. An initial check revealed that all packs were short-weighted with a range from 2 taels to 3.19 taels, or from 9.43 per cent to 26.9 per cent.

Hong Kong Customs today (September 12) urged retailers to comply with the WMO. Under the Ordinance, any person who in the course of trade supplies goods to another person by weight or measure should supply the goods in net weight or net measure. Any shortage of the quantity purporting to be supplied is an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$10,000. In addition, any person who uses for trade, or has in his possession for use for trade, any weighing or measuring equipment which is false or defective commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$20,000.

Any person who fails to let customers have a clear view of readings of the weighing or measuring equipment is liable to a maximum penalty of a fine of \$5,000.

Customs also reminds consumers to purchase products from reputable shops and pay attention to the weighting scale reading during the process of weighing by traders when ordering food supplied by weight.

Customs will continue to take stringent enforcement action against short-weight activities by traders to protect consumers' interests and uphold a fair trading environment.

Members of the public may report any suspected violations of the WMO to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).