

NEWS RELEASE

Not so high spirits

West Yorkshire Trading Standards Officers, working as part of a Yorkshire & the Humber regional survey, have uncovered evidence that Festive drinkers may not have got the deal they expected when buying spirits in some local bars.

A survey to measure the quantity of spirit drinks actually delivered to customers, against the quantity paid for, has yielded some surprising results. When officers measured the drinks sold, they found that the quantities ranged from over 26% deficient to over 30% in excess on 25 ml spirits. Branded spirits in the most popular bars can be sold for around £3.00 per 25 ml measure.

Graham Hebblethwaite, West Yorkshire's Chief Trading Standards Officer said

"Spirit drinks have traditionally been sold in bars by the use of approved optic measures or thimble measures of known accuracy. Results from the regional survey suggest two problems. Either thimble measures are not being used correctly to dispense drinks in view of the customer, because they are not full to the brim, or measures are being free-poured from the bottle without measuring. Errors were sometimes found even when thimble measures were used, but the greatest variations occurred with free-poured spirits. "

The practice of free-pouring spirit directly into the glass is the same as guessing the measure, but it is not illegal. Councillor Keith Wakefield of the Trading Standards Committee said "If bars are going to allow staff to sell spirits without the use of optics or thimble measures, this can easily result in customers being given a lesser quantity than that purported to be sold. This is illegal. However, our results show that free-pouring is as likely to lead to customers receiving more spirit than they realise. This is not a responsible way to sell alcohol and could lead to customers consuming more alcohol than they intend. Everyone knows that some bars get very busy at peak times and, bar staff are placed under pressure, but the results suggest that there is room for greater care in measuring what is an expensive commodity"

Notes for editors:

1. The Licensing Act 2003 stipulates that certain conditions shall be considered in relation to licence applications. These are: the prevention of crime and disorder/public safety/the prevention of public nuisance, and the protection of children from harm.
2. Weight and Measures law creates offences for short measure sales of alcohol and for the failure to sell gin, rum, vodka or whisky in prescribed quantities (25ml or 35ml or a multiple thereof.)
3. West Yorkshire Trading Standards survey results:

67 % Correct
22 % Deficient
11 % Excess

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