



WIRELESS EBT PROJECT

December 2011 Newsletter



From the Editor – Tracy Penick

Total Transactions	EBT Transactions	Total Sales on Wireless
2010 Total: 37,440	6,474 (17.3%)	\$869,401
2011 Totals:		
January 362	46 (12.7%)	\$ 17,346
February 493	57 (11.6%)	\$ 25,173
March 604	67 (11.1%)	\$ 20,259
April 830	73 (8.8%)	\$ 29,252
May 4,553	581 (12.7%)	\$158,440
June 4,214	787 (18.7%)	\$ 92,677
July 5,535	1321 (23.9%)	\$ 87,807
August 6,877	1742 (25.3%)	\$118,892
September 6,014	1366 (23.1%)	\$112,079
October 9,003	939 (10.4%)	\$220,357
November 2,136	156 (7.3%)	\$ 64,883
YTD		
2011 Total 40,621	7,135 (17.6%)	\$947,165

November 2011 Facts:

Total sales for November were higher than November 2010 (\$64,883 compared to \$53,437). The number of EBT transactions were also higher than a year ago. For this November, there were a total of 2,136 wireless transactions and a year ago there were 1,914.

In November 2011, there were 185,479 Food Assistance/EBT families in Iowa. \$49,075,223 in benefits were issued in November to these families.

Here are other interesting facts regarding November sales:

There were 75 farmers who were active in November and 47 of those had EBT sales. The farmers with the highest number of EBT transactions were:

- Hoffman Produce Farm (18) Waterloo
- Kiefer's Produce (16) Waterloo
- Nostalgia Farms (11) Walcott
- Mast Family Farm (7) Leon
- Yoder's Natural Farm (7) Bloomfield
- East View Orchard (6) Fredericksburg
- The Harvest Barn (6) Osceola
- Fitkin Popcorn Co. (5) Cedar Falls
- Iowa Food Cooperative (5) Des Moines
- Westrum Produce (5) Stratford

Congratulations to Hoffman Produce Farm for having the highest number of EBT transactions and for having the highest amount in EBT sales. Congratulations!

New IRS Law (IMPORTANT)

DHS has received notice that the IRS has postponed the effective date to December 31, 2012 for withholding on payments made in settlement of payment cards. It is still important to respond if either Total Merchant Services (Nurit machines) or TSYS (VeriFone machines) contact you to assure that they have your correct information on record. This whole process has been very confusing for everyone! Thanks for your patience as it all unfolds!

Boxes and Call Tags from TMS

The closing down of the wireless machines with Total Merchant Services (TMS) did not go very well at all this year. Tracy is working with TMS to try and get this process easier for next season.

It will now take approximately 15 business days to receive the box and the call tag. And it is important to remember that just because DHS requests a machine to be shut down on November 1st that it does take TMS a couple of weeks to accomplish this. So if you have requested to have your machine shut down and you don't receive a box and a call tag after 15 business days, please make sure to give Tracy a call so that she can check into it and request another call tag.

Another option is this – when your TMS machine was deployed this spring, TMS included a call tag sticker with the machine. You can go ahead and box up your machine, battery intact, download cord & charger cord and use this call tag to send back your machine to TMS. **But it is very important to keep a copy of the call tag for tracking purposes.**

Please remember to send back your wireless machine as soon as you receive the box and call tag to avoid any fees.

Farmer Survey

If you haven't completed the 2011 Farmer Survey, please do so as soon as possible! We have had very good response this year but we would love to hear from all of you. It only takes a few minutes to complete and the information is very important to DHS.

The link for the online survey is below:

<http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/718431/2011-Wireless-EBT-Project-Farmer-Survey>

Thanks for taking the time to complete this survey!

Iowa Fruit & Vegetable Growers Annual Conference

The annual conference for the Iowa Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association will be held on January 27-28 at the FFA Enrichment Center in Ankeny. Tracy will be hosting a booth at this conference to promote the Wireless EBT Project and hopefully will gain some new farmers for the project.

Please be sure to stop by and say hi if you are planning on attending this very worthwhile conference!

Downtown Des Moines Winter Market

The Downtown Des Moines market held their last winter market on December 16 & 17 at the Capital Square/Nollen Plaza. Several farmers that participate in the Wireless EBT Project were vendors at this market.



Bryan Etchen – Iowa Orchard



Kathleen Hoard – Kat's Garden

Supplies

Just a reminder - if you are running low on paper for your wireless machine to please give Kim or Tracy a call. DHS supplies the paper rolls for your wireless machines. It is very important that you do not use any other kind of paper as it could do damage to your machine. You always want to make sure to have plenty of paper on hand before you head to the market.

Upcoming Events

IA Farmers Market Association Conference - Saturday, February 11th in Des Moines. The speaker will be Mercedes Taylor-Puckett.

Reminders:

1. Remember that you cannot ring up a sale for another vendor. You could lose your Food Stamp certification and be terminated from the Wireless Project.
2. Since you are paying for the commercial transaction fees, be sure to keep track of what you are paying so you can use those expenses as a tax deduction.
3. You cannot set a minimum purchase amount. If an EBT household wishes to purchase \$.50 in onions, you do need to process the transaction. Same for any debit or credit transaction.
4. Hot foods and hot drinks (cocoa, coffee, and tea) cannot be purchased with SNAP EBT benefits.
5. If your Nurit machine quits working, you need to call TMS Tech Support at 1-888-848-6825. This is the phone number on the side of your machine. If you can't get the problem solved, please give Tracy a call.
6. If your VeriFone machine quits working, you will need to call Jason Butts at 402-602-4086 or Chris Shanahan at 402-602-4275. If you can't get the problem solved, please give Tracy a call.
7. Call Kim if you need any supplies such as paper rolls, power cords, or battery.
8. The second battery that we provide to you was purchased by DHS. If you ever need to return your wireless machine, be sure to keep one battery, carrying case and signs.

9. **Charge your batteries before market.** You should always have a charged battery, ready to go for market. If a battery is not holding a charge, contact Kim for a replacement.
10. Please make sure to keep the original box that your machine came in as it contains the Sim card, which is needed to identify your machine if you have to call TMS.

Help Desk

We are here to help you!

When you have questions about:

- **Participating in the Wireless project or reimbursement questions? Call Tracy Penick at 515-281-4935.**
- **What you can sell to EBT customers, or being authorized to accept EBT? Call USDA/FNS at 515-284-4035.**
- **Food Assistance eligibility? Call Tom Wakefield at 515-281-6820.**
- **Supplies – call Kim Jones at (515) 281-5410**