



WIRELESS EBT PROJECT

February 2014 Newsletter



From the Editor – Tracy Penick

Month	EBT Transactions	Debit/Credit Transactions	Total Transactions	EBT Sales	Debit/Credit Sales	Total Sales
January	58	395	453	\$1,399.49	\$14,822.50	\$16,221.99

January 2014 Facts:

Total sales for January this year were higher than January 2013 (\$16,221.99 compared to \$9,915.98). The number of EBT transactions were higher in 2014 than in 2013 (58 compared to 44). For January 2014, there were a total of 453 wireless transactions compared to 376 in 2013.

In January 2014, there were 195,303 Food Assistance/EBT families in Iowa. \$43,845,132 in benefits were issued in January to these families.

Here are other interesting facts regarding January sales:

There were 21 farmers who were active in January and 11 of those had EBT sales. The farmers with the highest number of EBT transactions were:

- ❖ Yoder’s Natural Farm (22) Bloomfield
- ❖ Grossman Meats (10) Preston
- ❖ Iowa Food Coop (8) Des Moines
- ❖ Sawyer Beef (6) Princeton
- ❖ Allen’s Grove Greenhouse (4) Donahue

Congratulations go out to Yoder’s Natural Farm for having the highest amount of EBT transactions and to Iowa Food Coop for having the highest amount in EBT sales. Congratulations!

Help Us Recruit New Farmers!

It is that time of year where we need to begin recruiting new farmers for the Wireless EBT Project. Do you know of any farmers that would benefit by being a part of the Wireless EBT Project? If so, please let Tracy know so that she can get in contact with them.

Iowa Farmers Market Association Workshop

The Iowa Farmers Market Association Workshop will be held on Saturday, February 8th at the First Christian Church on 2500 University Avenue in Des Moines. Tracy will be hosting a booth at this workshop 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 conference!

Iowa Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference

Tracy had the pleasure to host a booth at the Iowa Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference on January 23 & 24th. I was very much impressed at the presence of the farmers that participate in the Wireless EBT Project. Four of our farmers serve as members on the Iowa Fruit & Vegetable Growers board of directors. One of our farmers hosted a booth for his business and was very instrumental in helping me to promote the Wireless EBT Project to farmers that were interested in joining. And two of our farmers held workshops called “Farm Features” on their farms and their practices. I also had the opportunity to see and visit with many of our farmers. It is always great to catch up and to see what DHS can do to help to further this project!

Results from Farmers Annual Survey

Out of 142 farmers that participated in the Wireless EBT Project in 2013, 72 farmers completed the annual survey form this year. 58 completed online and 14 sent in a hard copy to DHS. Thanks so much to those that took the time to complete this survey. This information is compiled and shared with our federal partners, other states and non-profit groups.

Listed below is the wireless sales history for 2013 (does not include cash, checks, WIC or FMNP sales).

	\$0 -	\$501 -	\$1001 -	\$3001 -	\$5,001 -	\$10,001 -	\$20,001 -	\$60,001 -	\$75,001 or greater \$
	\$500	\$1,000	\$3,000	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$20,000	\$60,000	\$75,000	
# of farmers with this amt of sales	39	15	31	15	18	10	11	0	3

Do you accept Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program and WIC Farmers Markets Nutrition Program coupons?

- ❖ Yes – 75%
- ❖ No – 25%

What changes would you like to see in the Wireless Project?

- ❖ Lower transaction costs – 41 farmers
- ❖ Lower monthly fees – 37 farmers
- ❖ Make shutdown/bring up process easier – 10 farmers
- ❖ Better technology – 9 farmers
- ❖ Better customer service – 4 farmers
- ❖ Other – 13 farmers
 - Cost per transaction is too high.
 - Nothing – it’s all great.
 - Recipients have many options to use their EBT and farmers markets are not a priority.
 - Works fine as is.
 - More promotion of the EBT use at farmers markets.

Were your credit and debit sales higher than in 2012?

- ❖ Higher – 70%
- ❖ Lower – 30%

Were your EBT sales higher or lower than in 2012?

- ❖ Higher – 51%
- ❖ Lower – 49%

How many days a week did you use your wireless machine at a farmers market, roadside stand or at a farmer stand?

- ❖ 1 day – 14 farmers
- ❖ 2 days – 15 farmers
- ❖ 3 days – 14 farmers
- ❖ 4 days – 5 farmers
- ❖ 5 days – 4 farmers
- ❖ 6 days – 3 farmers
- ❖ 7 days – 14 farmers

DHS purchased all new signage for the 2013 market season. Do you feel like the new signs helped your sales?

- ❖ Yes – 71%
- ❖ No – 29%

Today, DHS provides the ‘Iowa’s EBT Farmers Market Project’ brochures at the local DHS offices, as well as online and also displays posters at all of the DHS county offices. What else could DHS do to help you promote EBT at the farmers markets?

- ❖ Remind their clients to consider shopping at farmers markets and emphasize the local economic benefits to their communities as well as freshness of produce.
- ❖ DHS did a good job.
- ❖ The signs work great already.
- ❖ Work with market managers to get advertising out that is part of the market’s advertisement.
- ❖ Press releases in newspapers.
- ❖ Radio ads and TV ads.
- ❖ I think you’re doing a great job.
- ❖ I really liked the new signs and people commented they noticed them this year.
- ❖ How about promoting the SNAP program and farmers market on Facebook. No other state is doing this.
- ❖ Educate the EBT customers on how to prepare and eat fresh fruits and vegetables and the health benefits of eating these foods.

Do you own a Smart Phone?

- ❖ Yes – 40%
- ❖ No – 60%

If no, are you considering purchasing a Smart Phone in the next 12 months?

- ❖ Yes – 13%
- ❖ No – 87%

Assuming you have a Smart Phone, would you be interested in using Smart Phone technology to process EBT transactions?

- ❖ Yes – 70%
- ❖ No – 30%

If the cost is significantly less than what you are paying today, would you be interested in using Smart Phone technology?

- ❖ Yes – 75%
- ❖ No - 25%

DHS provides all of you with a monthly newsletter with information and updates. Is this newsletter helpful?

- ❖ Yes – 95%
- ❖ No – 5%

If no, any ideas on how DHS can provide you with important news and updates?

- ❖ I don't always have the time to read it during the busy season.
- ❖ E-mail important issues, the newsletter is just a repeat of information.
- ❖ I read it every month. Thank you!

Please tell us what you think would improve the Wireless EBT Project for the 2014 season?

- ❖ Faster technology.
- ❖ For us, it worked fine as is.
- ❖ Lower costs.
- ❖ More media promotion for EBT at farmers markets.
- ❖ Certainly lowering transaction cost would be helpful for small farmers.
- ❖ Definitely like the idea of Smart Phone based technology. Customers are definitely getting used to this technology.
- ❖ The new machines we used in 2013 worked great and I was very happy with them. Just need more customers who use EBT!
- ❖ I think they already do a great job! If they could negotiate better rates for what it costs per transaction, etc. that would be a plus.
- ❖ I think the program is very successful.

Please share any ideas, comments, or concerns you may have.

- ❖ Really appreciate the service. Been an important asset to our business.
- ❖ Thanks for the services.
- ❖ Grateful for the help and advertising from the state through brochures and website.
- ❖ The only concern that I have is the monthly fees are rather high. Otherwise, our customers like that we accept debit, credit and EBT.
- ❖ If it weren't for this program I wouldn't have access to debit/credit/EBT thus I would be losing sales.
- ❖ Everyone at the DHS office was very helpful with the machine, but when I had to call after hours for help with the machine I didn't receive much help at all from that company.
- ❖ I think the hard work that has went into this program is working great. I appreciate all the effort and have gotten all my concerns dealt with speedily. Thanks you.

If you are interested in reading the entire report, contact Tracy Penick.

Any changes to your contact information?

Just a reminder to make sure that DHS has your current contact information. If your address, phone number, e-mail address or bank account changes this needs to be reported to DHS. If you have any changes, please contact Tracy so that we have your information current and up to date.

Paper for your wireless machine

Just a reminder that DHS supplies the paper rolls for your wireless machines. It is imperative that you use thermal paper or it could ruin your machine. Please do not use any other type of paper in your wireless machine other than the paper that DHS supplies. If you are running low on paper, please give Tracy a call.

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 402-574-7086 or Chris Shanahan at 402-574-7016. If you can't get the problem solved, please give Tracy a call.
7. Call Tracy 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 Tracy 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 515-421-3248.
- Food Assistance eligibility? Call Kari Lind at 515-281-7000.
- Supplies – call Tracy Penick at (515) 281-4935.