

Disposal of Animal By-Products – Guidance for Retail Butchers

Recent developments in wireless technology have resulted in almost half the population owning and using a mobile 'phone. Unfortunately, recent experience suggests the service you receive may not be all that its cracked up to be.

If you've already bought a mobile 'phone, or are just about to buy one, read this advice thoroughly to help you avoid the mobile blues.

Before You Buy

- Don't get carried away by the look of the 'phone and its features.
- Avoid getting talked into making an instant decision. There are plenty of deals on offer.
- Never sign blank forms or contract documents. You may not be able to back out if you change your mind.
- Be sure to ask if there is trial period. If there is, make use of it to the full.
- Check that the 'phone company (One 2 One, Vodaphone, Cellnet, or Orange) network covers all the areas where you'll be using your 'phone.
- Ask for a copy of the contract. Read it before you sign up to any deal. Make sure you know how long you'll be tied to the 'phone company's network before you can cancel. Check the period of notice you'll have to give, and how you will be compensated for the loss of any airtime if your 'phone develops a fault and has to be repaired or replaced.
- Find out what the 'phone will cost to replace if it's lost or stolen. Depending on the model it could be hundreds of pounds.
- Ask your insurance company if your household insurance covers the loss or theft of the 'phone. Don't pay for an expensive shop policy if its not needed.
- Decide how you will be using your 'phone, and what you'll mainly be using it for. Only occasionally, as a replacement for a fixed 'phone, or to call other mobiles. Many 'phone company offers like free connection, free minutes, and low cost calls, disguise alternative ways of imposing costly usage charges. Call diversion and overseas use (roaming) are generally not available on "pay as you go" type tariffs. Check thoroughly before you sign up.
- Get written copies of all the 'phone companies monthly subscription charges. Compare the rates for your proposed 'phone usage and the range of available 'phone for each charge.
- Ask for your chosen 'phone company's subscriber helpline number. Call it to find out what kind of service back up you can expect if your 'phone is faulty or stops working, and how quickly it will be replaced.

After You Buy

If you have problems with your mobile 'phone after you've bought it, keep calm. The top causes for complaint are:

- The shop you bought your 'phone from doesn't want to know about your complaint: If you bought it from a shop, it is usually acting as an agent for the 'phone company and manufacturer of the 'phone. The shop will be responsible for putting things right, although they may have to send a faulty 'phone back to the manufacturer. In some cases you may be asked to return it yourself, but you should be compensated for the cost and any airtime period you haven't been able to use. 'Phones should only be sent back using a secure postal or delivery service. Never allow yourself to be fobbed off by the shop - be persistent.

- Problems with 'phone companies.
If the problem is with your 'phone company it might be sensible to deal with them direct.
Common problems are:
 - Network faults, and long repair times
 - Difficulty in making contact
 - Ignoring complaints, and failing to keep customers informed of progress

These complaints are matters of contract, and can only be settled between you and the telephone company. You should use the telephone company's complaints procedure. If you can prove your complaint is justified you should be compensated by refunding all or part of your subscription charges. If you are on a prepay service, usually called "pay as you go" or "prepay" then your 'phone should be credited with call time. The Office of the Telephone Regulator (OFTEL) may be able to advise you with these problems, but does not have powers to impose a settlement for you. The address and contact point for OFTEL is given below.

- Misleading advertising
- Charging for services not requested
- Receiving bills after cancelling service
- Difficulties with transferring network credits
- Unfair terms in 'phone contracts

Complaints in the above categories should be referred direct to OFTEL for specific advice, after you have made a complaint to the telephone company. In certain cases OFTEL may refer you to other advice or enforcement agencies, or deal entirely with the matter themselves.

Where a manufacturer takes responsibility for a faulty 'phone, you should make sure the 'phone company is notified so that your bill can be credited for any period you were without your 'phone and unable to use it.

This advice is designed to provide basic guidance to traders. It is **not** a complete or authoritative statement of the law. A large print version is available.

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