



MAR 20 1984

Carroll S. Brickenkamp, Ph.D.  
Manager, Research and Development  
Office of Weights and Measures  
National Bureau of Standards  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
Washington, DC 20234

Dear Dr. Brickenkamp:

This is in response to your February 28 letter that requested our opinion on whether the wax coating on certain kinds of cheese should be considered part of the tare or part of the net weight. You pointed out that although the wax is not consumed, it may be an integral part of the manufacture of the cheese. Also, you stated that cheese is sold wholesale by a weight that includes the wax.

We are of the opinion that 21 CFR 101.105(g) requires that wax coatings on cheese always be considered part of the tare. This section states that the declaration of quantity of contents shall accurately reveal the quantity of food in the package exclusive of wrappers and other material packed therewith. Even when the wax is an integral part of the manufacture of the cheese, the wax itself is not derived from the curd of any type of milk. As a result, it would be inappropriate to consider the wax to be part of the food known as cheese. Also, most consumers would consider such wax inedible and would discard it. Under these circumstances, we believe that consumers would be misled by declarations of net weight including the wax coating. Further, you should be aware that our position on these wax coatings applies to wholesale as well as retail cheese packages. Both types of packages could be considered misbranded if the net weight declaration included the wax coating.

If we can be of further assistance, please let us know.

Sincerely yours,

Taylor M. Quinn  
Associate Director for  
Compliance  
Bureau of Foods