

has not been possible — and perhaps never will be — to perhaps never will be — to

Noren said he is now setting up a "crime prevention unit" which would concentrate on drug users as much as it would on (Continued on Page 2)

Is New Pot Law Bad News?

By PEGGY RUDNICKI
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The state's new marijuana law may not be the good fortune pot smokers believe it to be.

local law enforcement officials said today.

The new law, which goes into effect at 12:01 a.m. Thursday, sharply reduces possession penalties and allows a ticket-

like citation to be issued to those caught with one ounce or less of marijuana.

But Sheriff Al Noren and officers say it may actually be an "adverse law" for the small

marijuana user — at least in Santa Cruz County.

"Normally, if you are caught with anything less than an ounce it is thrown away," said a law enforcement official and former officer.

He said that filling out reports and gathering evidence to make a case is not worth the time and money for one ounce of marijuana.

Most of the time — unless there was another crime involved — the possessor is set free.

"But now we can issue a \$100 citation," said the official.

Sheriff Al Noren agreed. "Where someone used to get away with nothing, now they will get at least a \$100 fine," he said.

Noren said he believed, however, the law will "encourage the use of marijuana" and will "only add to the problems we have already."

He also said it makes it possible now for "a guy to deal in ounces and run around with relative immunity."

Noren said officers will not carry scales to measure the confiscated marijuana as is done in Los Angeles.

Instead they will decide if the amount is about an ounce and issue a citation if it appears to fit into the new law.

But if there is a question, the pot will be taken into custody and weighed at the office.

If it is a larger amount, then Noren said he would ask the district attorney to file another charge.

While law officials said they didn't believe the law would have a big effect on pot convic-



Starting Thursday, this small bag of marijuana won't be enough to get someone in serious trouble. The state's new marijuana law provides a ticket-like citation, with a fine of up to \$100, for possession of one ounce or

less of pot. Sheriff Al Noren shows what one ounce of the stuff looks like, above, and said his officers will make a "value judgment" whether the pot in someone's possession measures more than set amount.

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