

A LOT BUT NOT EVERYTHING

Customers expect a lot of Hermes, and rightly so. But some of the odd requests we occasionally receive cannot be met – it would simply be wrong to do so



If a package is well wrapped, you can't see what's inside: Does it contain a pleasant surprise – or a nasty one?

Whether a chicken or a lobster, food and treats can be sent without difficulty. However, they must be well packed so that they stay fresh and do not soak through to the outer packaging.



Some customers think it's a good idea to send animals in a parcel. Actually, it's not a good idea: Hermes does not transport live or dead animals (Article 4.2.6 of its general terms and conditions).



Bombs and grenades have also been submitted for shipping by Hermes customers. Fortunately, the ammunition wasn't live. However, all such consignments are a real warning.

If the customer had read and taken notice of Article 4.2.6 of the general terms and conditions of the Hermes PrivatPaketService, a real mess could have been avoided. But instead Hermes staff were faced with a blood-red trickle.

It was in fact blood which was seeping through the cardboard package and dripping onto the floor of the Hermes branch in question – animal blood, as the employees discovered when they opened the package. Inside they found plastic bags containing around two kilos of offal and three bars of chocolate. A pretty ugly sight! And moreover an obvious breach of the Hermes terms and conditions. They are clear on the matter: “Consignments containing live animals and mortal remains of animals or humans are not accepted”.

“But who reads the small print?”, many of you will ask. Who reads the terms and conditions? Admittedly, many customers don’t. And they don’t need to because common sense dictates the certain things should not be shipped with Hermes. Or at least that’s the theory. In practice, Hermes staff repeatedly come across consignments which simply make them shake their heads and think: “how is this possible?”

One time they found a huge boar’s head in a package, another time a dead sheep. Sometimes a grenade or a bomb sets off a scare (fortunately they were not live), and sometimes a package will give off an unmistakable smell. A package was once found containing a nice

fat delivery of marijuana. The police sniffer dogs later sniffed out what the staff had long been able to smell for themselves.

Local headlines once reported the case of a mysterious urn. On a Saturday morning in June 2005, shortly after 9pm, a package was dropped off at the entrance to a cemetery in the Berlin district of Charlottenburg. Two guards noticed that the package contained a hole from which a piece of string was hanging. Was it a bomb? They alerted their boss, who alerted the police.

A major operation began – the area was cordoned off up to a radius of 500 metres. Explosives experts arrived at the scene and carefully opened the package, in which they found an urn filled with the ashes of a deceased person. An undertaker from Berlin-Wedding had sent them using Hermes – an entirely normal procedure between undertakers, as it later turned out. Whether normal or not, this was also a breach of Hermes’s terms and conditions. But as a Hermes spokesman, later quoted in the Berliner Zeitung, said: “We of course do not know what is in a parcel. We trust the customer to abide by our terms and conditions”.

And because Hermes is not legally authorised to screen packages or indeed open them, this will remain the case in the future. It’s better to trust people – sometimes the people at Hermes don’t want to know what a customer has put in a package. ■



According to its general terms and conditions, Hermes does not transport the ashes of deceased people, but it will accept urns. At a cemetery in Berlin, such a package was suspected of being a bomb. Only after launching a major operation were the police able to clear up the mistake.

Poppies are beautiful, but raw opium is derived from dried poppy seed pods. Hermes does not transport illicit drugs (Article 4.2.1 of its general terms and conditions) – or flowers.

