

Idaho bans 'Five Wives' vodka over risque label

by [Dawn House](#)

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c. 2012 Salt Lake Tribune SALT LAKE CITY (RNS) Idaho regulators have decided not to carry Five Wives Vodka because of its label, while Utah booze cops have deemed the bottle's depiction of 19th-century women in petticoats holding kittens near their lady parts as acceptable.

Although some may see the label as a spoof on Utah's polygamy past, the inspiration actually came from a wagon traveling from Missouri several years before the arrival of Mormon pioneers, Ogden's Own Distillery owner Tim Smith said.

The 1841 Bartleson-Bidwell caravan included 66 men and five women -hence the label Five Wives Vodka.

As for the strategically placed pets, Smith said the women are holding the kittens "in an area that's a little lower than their belly buttons, but I suppose you could say it's near their genitalia."

"We're not trying to offend anyone. It's just a cute historical photograph we found on the Internet."

Jeff Anderson, director of the Idaho Liquor Division, said the state declines to stock about 500 products each year because of space limitations in state-controlled liquor stores.

"This product attempted to compete in a crowded category," he said. "If there would have been a tie-breaker on this vodka, the name and label would have been it" because a segment of the population might find it offensive. Idaho's position also blocks establishments from receiving special orders of the product.

"It's a rare move for them to ban a product outright from special orders," said John Challenger, president of the Idaho distributor Elite Spirits.

Steve Conlin, Ogden's Own partner and vice president of marketing, said in a statement released Tuesday (May 29) that the ban has forced the company to withdraw its sponsorship of the Boise Music Festival, scheduled for July 7.

"Between sponsorship and attending the concert, we estimate the company would have spent nearly \$10,000 in Boise over the weekend of the festival," said Conlin. "We'd love to bring a group and represent our brands at an event of this magnitude."

Last fall, Ogden's Own asked Utah regulators to approve listing Five Wives Vodka in state liquor outlets. A state tasting committee endorsed the product, and the U.S. Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau approved the label.

"If a label meets federal TTB guidelines, it is considered to be a sound indication of label integrity," said Tom Zdunich, purchasing director for the Utah Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control.