



SAFE FARMS



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Bale Handling

Potential Hazards:

Farmers in Manitoba have been seriously and fatally injured while working with large round hay bales. As they can weigh up to 900 kilograms, handling bales presents several risks including: risk of worker entanglement in balers (while trying to unplug the machine), risk of bales falling onto operators (from forklifts and tractors), and risk of serious injury to children (falls from hay piles, becoming pinned between bales, etc.).



How to Control the Hazard:

Prevention is the key to a safe and efficient large round hay bale system. Baler operators must be aware of hazards at all times, and remain alert to situations which may cause injury to the operator or to others – this includes employees and family members.

Baler Pre-check and Operator Training:

DO:

- Ensure only responsible and trained persons operate balers or bale handling equipment. Operators must be familiar with machinery maintenance and operation procedures.
- Ensure baler parts are properly adjusted and functioning according to the manufacturer's recommendations before operating the baler (*pre-inspect for*: loose or missing nuts, guards or bent pickup teeth; *replace*: missing guards, belts, chains, hydraulic hoses, twine feeding, cutting mechanisms, slip clutch, roll scraper, rear gate latch, etc.).
- Ensure all lights / signage / reflectors / emblems are in place and meet Manitoba's *Highway Traffic Act* requirements.

During Baling:

DO:

- Only use tractors equipped with a Roll Over Protection System (ROPS).
- Ensure all tractor attachments are secure and the baler is properly connected to the tractor.
- Be cautious while operating a baler on uneven or hilly terrain – round balers are top heavy and may tip sideways if a wheel drops in a hole or ditch.
- Discharge bales on level ground to prevent out-of-control rolling bales.
- Ensure no one is near the rear gate (blind spot) when it is being raised or lowered.
- Before servicing, cleaning, or adjusting a baler: disengage the tractor power takeoff (PTO), shut off the engine and remove the key.
- Ensure children and bystanders are out of harm's way.

DO NOT:

- Never attempt to hand feed or remove twine from a running baler.
- Never allow anyone to ride along on the baler or tractor.

Workplace Safety and Health Contact Information:

Winnipeg: (204) 945-3446

Brandon: (204) 726-6361

Toll-Free: 1-866-888-8186 (Manitoba only)

24-Hour Emergency Line: (204) 945-0581

Publications/resources available at: www.safemanitoba.com

(see over)



Unplugging the Baler**DO:**

- To prevent and reduce plugging: begin with a properly formed windrow to form a good bale core, and vary tractor speed to match crop conditions and windrow size.
- Once plug is clean, spread the bunched material in a windrow for pickup.

DO NOT:

- Never attempt to unplug a machine while it is running.
- Never attempt to feed material into the baler by hand or foot.

Moving Bales

Failure to follow safe operating procedures for moving bales **may result in serious crushing injuries or death** for the tractor operator.

DO:

- Ensure handling unit has enough power to handle the bale and is using approved attachments (Refer to owner's manual).
- When moving bales, keep loads as low as possible and avoid jerky movements.
- Match travel speed to conditions and ensure there is adequate ballast on the front and rear to counter-balance the load.
- Avoid steep hillsides where possible. When it is necessary to pick up a bale on a steep hillside, work from the downhill side.

DO NOT:

- Never lift round bales using a standard loader without the proper restraining devices (Bales may roll out of the bucket, down the loader arms and onto the operator). ROPS systems do not protect against falling bales.

Stacking**DO:**

- Locate stacks on flat, even ground.
- Stacked round bales must be chocked.
- Stack bales tightly and at a stable height.
- Ensure stacks are clear of power lines.

DO NOT:

- Never stack bales higher than the safe operating height of the handling unit.
- Never allow children to play on bale stacks.

Transporting Bales by Trailer**DO:**

- Ensure the proper restraining frames are in place.
- Use fitted hooks to accommodate load securing ropes.
- Avoid rough terrain whenever possible.
- Match travel speed to meet conditions.
- Ensure the load being pulled is no heavier than the pulling unit.
- Use the same gear for downhill as is used for uphill.
- Refer to Manitoba's *Highway Traffic Act* to ensure the load's width meets safety requirements.
- Ensure trailer lights / signage / emblems / reflectors are in working order and meet Manitoba's *Highway Traffic Act* requirements.

DO NOT:

- Never allow anyone to ride on the trailer.

Bulletin content adapted from *Agricultural Guide*, University of Missouri.

Reference to legal requirements under workplace safety and health legislation:

Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health Act, W210

Additional workplace safety and health information available at: www.safemanitoba.com

SAFE Farms Bulletin No. 6 – Safety Risk to Farm Tractor Operators: ROPS Certification

This information is available in alternate formats upon request.

Ces renseignements sont offerts dans de multiples formats sur demande.