

13th January 2012

UPDATE - AWEX WOOL PACK TRIALS

As previously advised, AWEX is undertaking a review of the wool pack standard. This is in response to the problems identified in NSW of over-width loads. The Road Rules state that a legal load does not exceed 2.5 metres in width; however, it is evident that some loads of wool have exceeded that limit. As a result, traffic infringement notices had been issued to drivers. In recognising the difficulty of resolving this matter, the NSW Government announced an immediate 2.7 m width concession for the transportation of wool bales in NSW on 30th June 2011. The concession is in place for 12 months.

AWEX is undertaking trials with the aim of quantifying the contributing factors and evaluating whether modification(s) to the woolpack can resolve the problem.

Initially, the work involved gathering data in relation to the dimensions of wool bales received into wool stores. The length measurements made on 650 bales at wool stores in Newcastle, NSW and Tottenham, VIC were put into two length groups as follows:

≤1250 mm = 36% **≥1255 mm = 64%**

Not all loads carrying bales ≥1255 mm in length would be over-width; however, it should be remembered that the length of a bale may increase if it is under the pressure and weight of other bales on a truck, and in some cases, two “over length” bales may be put end-to-end across the truck, thus increasing the likelihood of an over-width load.

This part of the trial also made an assessment of wool type and wool length in relation to the length of bales with the following results:

	XB BLS	XB FLC	MFLC	MPCS	MBLS	MSTN /CRS	MLMS FLC	MLKS	TOTAL
Mean	1279	1274	1274	1260	1244	1245	1239	1241	1265
Max	1315	1395	1435	1370	1335	1360	1290	1310	1435
Min	1215	1180	1130	1100	1200	1125	1165	1140	1100
No. Bales	16	85	325	67	26	48	32	51	650
%≤1250mm	19	22	29	23	54	56	59	69	
%>1250mm	81	78	71	66	46	44	41	31	

Although the number of bales for each wool type varies, early indications are that breed (XB vs. Merino) and length (M FLC vs. M LMS and MLKS) are contributing factors affecting the length of a bale. These and other factors, such as bale weight and the type of wool press, are being considered in the On Farm Trials currently being conducted in NSW and VIC (see page 2).

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Members' update



The second part of the trial is the on-farm trialing of newly designed woolpacks.

For the purpose of the trial AWEX commissioned the manufacture of 3 variants to the current standard wool pack that may improve the performance of the packs (in terms of bale length) and thus help reduce the occurrence of over-width loads. These variants are being trialed under normal operational conditions against a current wool pack as the control – for consistency, all wool packs have been produced by the same manufacturer. All wool packs being trialed meet the current standard for dimension and all current testing requirements including seam and tearing strength, bending length and friction.

Over the past 3 months, staff have travelled to properties and wool stores in NSW and VIC to undertake a variety of measurements on these wool packs when pressed up with wool covering a broad range of types. AWEX is appreciative of the assistance given by both brokers and growers in organizing and assisting with the conduct of these trials. So far properties have been located near Temora and Wagga, NSW and Ararat, Beaufort and Hamilton, VIC.

Wool Packs being Trialed:

1. Standard Wool Pack: Standard 3 panel construction.
2. Variant 1: Standard wool pack with 4 sewn seams in the base; a 5 panel construction,
3. Variant 2: Standard wool pack with 4 sewn seams; a 5 panel construction, with reinforced strips weaved into each panel.
4. Variant 3: Standard wool pack; a 3 panel construction, with reinforced strips weaved into each panel.

Also being trialed on each of the above wool packs is a Bale Fastening Guide (BFG). The BFG is a line sewn onto each flap of the wool pack, which acts as a guide for the correct placing of bale fasteners, to give the best opportunity of meeting legal length requirements.

On-Farm Trials

The on-farm trials will also examine the effect of a number of different factors including:

- Breeds of sheep e.g. Merino, crossbred,
- Wool types, including fleece, skirtings and oddments,
- Wool press manufacturers,
- Environmental conditions (wet, pastoral),
- Bale weights.

AWEX is working closely with the Industry and RTA on these trials. At their conclusion, the trial results will be tabled to ISAC for their consideration of any (potential) change to the current wool pack standard.

It is anticipated that this set of trials will be completed early in 2012.

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