



A GUIDE

for

COTTON
BALE

STANDARDS

PREFACE

The goal of this Guide is to provide individuals and companies involved in handling cotton bales a communication tool depicting bale conditions generally acceptable to receiving warehouses and textile mills.

The first publication of “A Guide for Cotton Bale Standards,” in 1982, was developed due to the lack of clear definitions for those bale conditions expected by U.S. textile mills. The 1982 Guide successfully communicated those definitions among ginners, warehousemen, shippers and receivers. Photographs of many common bale defects were used to visually explain inferior bale standards. Photographs of exceptional bale conditions were displayed as the conditions the textile community desired.

Since 1982, bale conditions have changed significantly. Flat and compress bales were the norm while gin universal density and gin standard density bales were few in number. Now the reverse holds true, with less than one percent of the U.S. crop packaged as flat and compress bales. Sampling processes have become less destructive to the bale package. Instead of cutting through the bag to collect samples, most samples are cut and pulled at the press before the bale is covered. These fundamental changes in practices have improved the initial package conditions which raise the standard.

Advances in baseline standards justified updating the communication tool upon which industry segments rely. The Joint Cotton Industry Bale Packaging Committee (JCIBPC) has provided “A Guide for Cotton Bale Standards” for your use into the 21st century. With continued improvements to packaging materials and further automation of bale handling and processing, this Guide helps the cotton industry remain informed.

GRADING SYSTEM

These standards are a visual grading system for evaluating cotton bale conditions and are applicable for all types of bales whether flat, compress, standard, or universal density.

Bales are to be placed into one of three categories - Grade A, Grade B and Other - by comparison with the photographic standards.

Grade A conditions are sought after for each and every bale ginned in the U.S., by all people involved in delivering and receiving cotton. Grade A bales are generally considered acceptable and are characterized by complete enclosure among other things. Complete coverage is the goal of bale packaging and is desirable for optimum prevention of cotton contamination from dirt, grime, oil and grease.

Grade B bales fundamentally differ from Grade A bales by the lack of complete coverage. Since Grade B bales allow for exposed cotton, there is the chance of lint contamination from dirt, grime, oil and grease. Grade B bales are generally considered acceptable provided exposed lint is clean and heads and sample holes are completely covered.

Conditions other than Grade A or B represent a poor level of packaging coverage and restraint. Bales fitting this characterization should be repaired or repackaged with JCIBPC approved materials so as to improve conditions to Grade B or better. If improvements are not made, bales will be subject to rejection.

If bales must be rejected it is recommended that action be taken immediately upon arrival at the receiving facility. This Guide may be utilized not only at U.S. textile mills but also at warehouse facilities. In addition, if unacceptable bale conditions are created solely by failure of an experimental material approved for tests and identified with the JCIBPC, a waiver of these standards is recommended. In those cases, failure should be reported to the JCIBPC for its consideration in future decisions involving those materials.

Developed by the JCIBPC, these definitions and photographs are meant to assist in the trade of cotton. These Grades may be used by textile manufacturers and warehousemen as requirements in contracts along with other conditions such as bale size and a no contamination designation. Characterizations of these Grades refer to the most recent annual publication of "Specifications for Cotton Bale Packaging Materials," published by the JCIBPC. A copy may be obtained by contacting the National Cotton Council of America.

GRADE A

Grade A bales are characterized by the following:

- Completely covered
- Covered with JCIBPC approved packaging and recommended patching material
- JCIBPC specified number of ties
- Wire knots on ball of bale
- All ties recessed into flat side of bale ⁽¹⁾ (Recommended)
- Square (level) heads
- Permanent Bale Identification (PBI) tag on bale

Grade A bales are generally considered acceptable. The recipients of cotton bales expect Grade A conditions and many times specifically require Grade A conditions in contracts.



GRADE A



GRADE A

Repaired bales must be restored to initial configuration prior to occurrence of broken ties or torn bagging.



Bale configuration repaired adequately.



JCIBPC recommended patching material completely covers clean cotton.

GRADE B

Grade B bales are characterized by the following:

- Completely covered heads
- Sample holes covered with JCIBPC recommended patching material
- Some exposed lint, if free of contaminants
- Covered with JCIBPC approved packaging
- JCIBPC specified number of ties
- Wire knots on ball of bale
- Identification on bale

EXCEPTIONS: Bales with broken tie(s) in which the basic configuration is unchanged are allowed a variance from this standard.

Heads are completely covered.



Sample holes are covered.



GRADE B

The PBI tag is torn off or unreadable, however the bale must still be identifiable.



This bale has non-level heads.



Small tears are acceptable if exposed lint is free of contaminants.



GRADE B

Ties are not recessed causing bag tears.



Exception: Broken ties are not altering bale configuration.

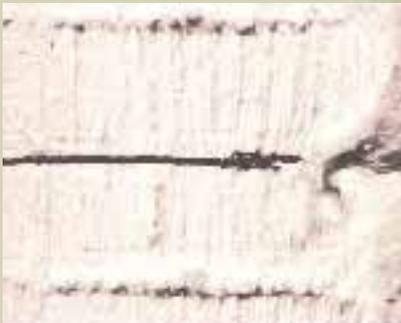
OTHER

All other bale conditions are inadequate for protecting cotton bales from contamination and in some cases hinder processing or consumption. Any bales with unacceptable conditions should be repaired or repackaged with JCIBPC approved materials so as to improve conditions to Grade B or better.



Not JCIBPC approved bagging —
black sewing thread unacceptable.

Rust from ties is on lint.



Wire knots are on flat side of bale.

OTHER

Open heads expose lint to contaminants.

Contamination is unacceptable.



Sample holes are not covered.



Bale lacks bagging.



OTHER

Excessive floor dirt is on lint.



Large tears exposing lint are unacceptable.



No identification is found on bale.



Grease is on lint.



OTHER

Basic configuration is significantly altered.



Bale configuration is not repaired adequately.



Water damage.

⁽¹⁾ **Guide for Cotton Bale Standards**

In 1982 the Joint Cotton Industry Bale Packaging Committee (JCIBPC) developed the first publication of *A Guide for Cotton Bale Standards*. Its purpose was to facilitate communications by providing pictorial examples of a variety of bale conditions. The original guide contained four grades, A through D. While Grade B bales were acceptable, Grade A was included to depict ideal bales and a goal for which the industry could strive.

In 1998, an updated version of the guide was published so that bale descriptions would be more consistent with modern packaging methods. Three levels of conditions are described in the new guide. They are A, B and “other”, with “other” being unacceptable. Grade B was included to depict minimum levels of acceptability, and consistent with the first edition, Grade A bales represents an ideal target.

Included in the 1998 version of *A Guide for Cotton Bale Standards* is a requirement in Grade A bales that all ties must be recessed. The recessed tie requirement has caused controversy in some areas of the Cotton Belt. Although retrofitting a gin press to enable it to recess ties is not unduly burdensome in many cases, the ability to create recessed ties is not practical at every gin.

The fundamental difference between Grade A and Grade B bales is a lack of full coverage of the bale. Recessed ties was included as one of the characteristics of Grade A bales in the new guide because of the significant reduction in bagging cuts when wire ties are kept out of contact with bagging. However, the presence of non-recessed ties does not, by itself, translate into a bale that is not fully covered.

It is important to note what the guide is, and what it is not:

It is not --

- specifications or requirements for CCC loan eligibility. The only publication of the JCIBPC that can be used for CCC loan purposes is the *Specifications for Cotton Bale Packaging Materials*;
- a hard and fast set of standards governing the acceptability of cotton bales;

It is --

- a guide intended to demonstrate the ideal target for cotton bales and to demonstrate what bales are generally considered unacceptable upon delivery; and
- a guide that is sometimes used by merchants and mills in establishing contractual requirements of fitness for delivered cotton.

Several difficulties with gin modification have been cited. For example, it has been stated that press dogs interfere with recesses in some models and that platen tolerances of certain presses are not adequate for adding bar stock. It also has been argued that welding additions to the inside of a gin press without a manufacturer’s analysis is not advisable. Experts cite concern over increasing frictional drag and the corresponding increase in hydraulic power requirements.

Additionally, a number of gins are considering a transition to new packaging methods such as 8 to 6 tie and wish to defer installation of recess bars until after platen changes are made. Installing recess bars to the inside of press walls is considered a permanent installation and once bars are welded to the press walls, they are difficult to remove and relocate.

Amending the guides at this point to remove the recessed tie standard unnecessarily lowers the bar for the cotton industry, ignores the role non-recessed ties play in increased lint exposure, and short-changes the investment already made by a number of gins.

Therefore, with respect to the 1998 guide, the JCIBPC –

- fully supports bale packaging goals designed to result in the best possible product to textile mills and notes that non-recessed ties contribute to instances of exposed lint on bales;
- recognizes difficulties that a number of gins may have in converting presses to create recessed ties and urges those gins not to attempt modification that is contrary to common sense and good reasoning, but to make such modification a high priority to be implemented as soon as practical; and
- Because the presence of non-recessed ties does not, by itself, translate into a bale that is not fully covered, urges that this condition alone not be used to reject bales delivered under a contractual requirement calling for Grade A bales.



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