

What size bales?

When choosing bale size, think carefully about the hay making, handling, storage and freight costs. Calculate these costs on a dollar per tonne, not just on a per bale basis.

For the best freight efficiency with hay, always aim for 25 tonne on a 45 foot drop deck trailer. A good operator with modern equipment can achieve this with 8x4x3 or 8x3x3 bales, and can achieve a moisture content of 12% - 16%.

All other bale types and sizes including the 8x4x4 bales do not maximise load weights, therefore increasing freight costs for buyers and reducing your marketability.

Due to freight issues and poor freight efficiencies, round bales are not encouraged. If you are making round bales we advocate a 4x4 round bale - not a 5x4 - as you get more weight on the truck. Small square bales are suitable for specific or niche markets only.

Bale size, weight and freight cost comparisons

Bale size	8x3x2	8x3x3	8x4x3	8x4x4	Rnd 4x4	Rnd 4x3	Rnd 5x4 (Vic)
Bales per trailer (45 foot drop deck)	70	60	41	30	60	100	46
Baling Cost (\$/bale)	17	17	17	17	17	17	17
Hay							
Estimated Bale Weight	210	440	620	700	350	100	400
Baling Cost (\$/tonne)	81	39	27	24	49	170	43
Load / Nett Weight	15	26	25	21	21	10	18
Freight Cost \$/km	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Distance To Market (km)	300	300	300	300	300	300	300
Freight Cost (\$/tonne)	82	45	47	57	57	120	65
Straw							
Estimated Bale Weight	150	300	400	450	200	60	280
Baling Cost (\$/tonne)	113	57	43	38	85	283	61
Load / Nett Weight	11	18	16	14	12	6	13
Freight Cost \$/km	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Distance To Market (km)	300	300	300	300	300	300	300
Freight Cost (\$/tonne)	114	67	73	89	100	200	93

HOT TIP:
Regardless of bale size, monitor the hay making carefully. Check bale weights and moisture content regularly.

Please note:

For this comparison, we are assuming all bales cost the same to make (\$/bale). Although not entirely accurate, it is reasonably close. Costs will vary across farms.

Please note:

Bale weights vary widely between balers and contractors.

Did you know:

In Victoria, you can legally load more than 30 bales, however in practice bale shape and structure prevents maximum capacity on many occasions.

Above example is based on a 45 foot drop deck trailer charging \$4/km using the following numbers of bales on a truck. Did you pay your contractor by the bale? Heavy bales not only decrease your freight and contracting costs, they also decrease your on-farm handling and storage costs. Many contractors with large square balers are achieving 24-26 tonne on a 45 drop deck hay trailer for cereal hay and lucerne. It is still a challenge to get weight into straw, but the machinery and operators are getting better all the time.

We are here to help

Phone 1300 669 429