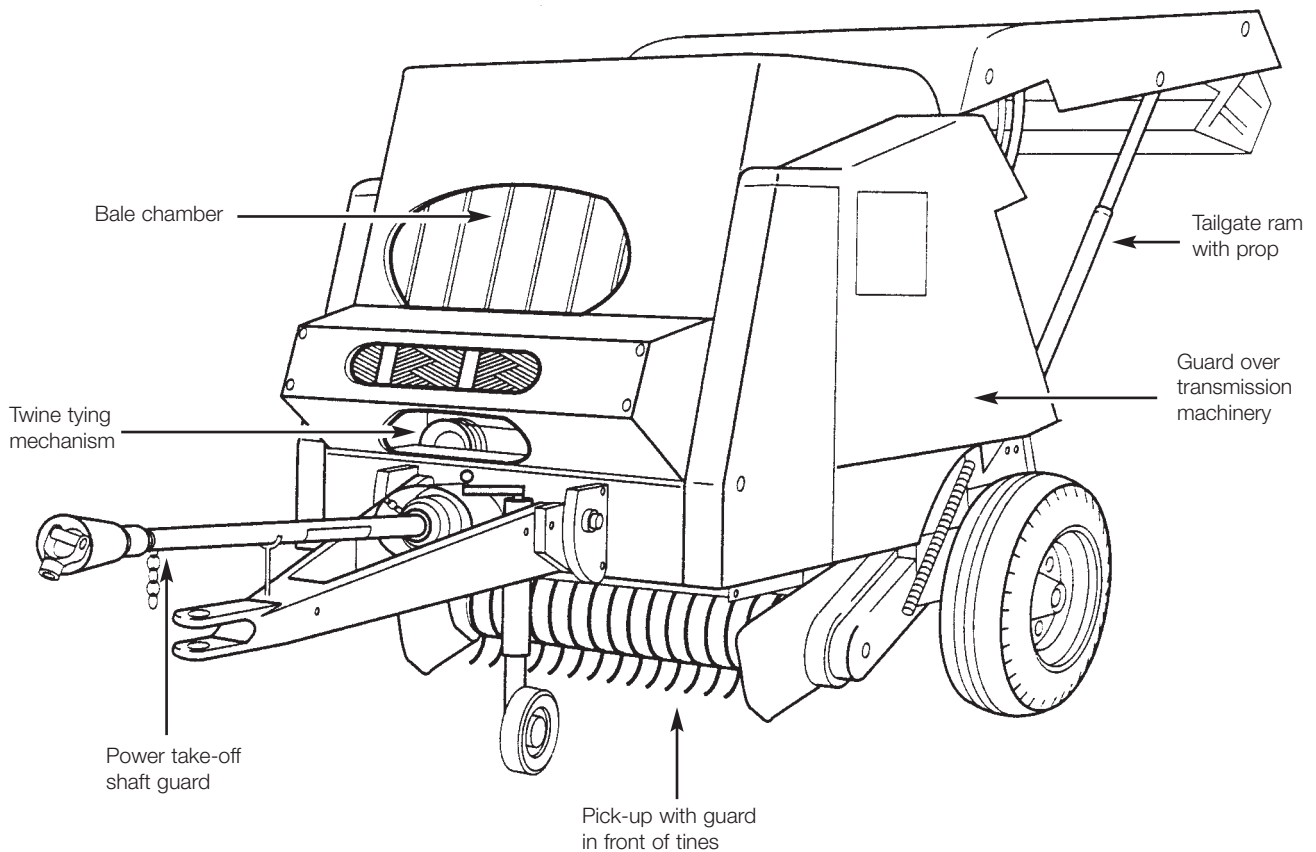


Safe use of big round balers

HSE information sheet

Agriculture Information Sheet No 4



Introduction

Over the last ten years, HSE has investigated 36 accidents involving balers. Five people died and the rest involved serious injury and amputations.

It is extremely dangerous to work on a machine while it is under power. All of the fatal accidents and many serious accidents involving amputations happened when operators were pulled into the chamber of a big round baler when trying to clear blockages or working on the twine threading mechanism. This information sheet outlines the hazards and guarding requirements and lists the safe methods for using big round balers.

For all machines the following types of hazards must be considered. Different types of big round roll-type balers have their own features which should be thought about when considering hazards and assessing risks.

'Safe stop' is the most important safety action of all:

- Handbrake on.
- Controls neutral.
- Stop engine.

Hazards

The hazards are:

- being pulled into the chamber at the pick-up;
- being pulled into the powered pressure rollers or other parts of the machine when attempting to rethread the baler – the twine often catching around an operator's arm or wrist;
- being trapped by the various parts of transmission or moving machinery on the baler;
- being entangled by an inadequately guarded power take-off shaft.

Don't:

- reach into the pick-up reel area with an arm or leg or attempt to clear a blockage unless the tractor engine is stopped;
- try to rethread twine or correct a twine fault unless the tractor engine is stopped;
- carry out any maintenance, greasing or adjustment with the tractor engine running;
- use a baler lacking the capacity for the windrow/crop. Blockages will occur if there is a mismatch between pick-up and windrow widths;
- bale large clumps of material in a windrow. This may cause blockages if not baled carefully.

Do:

- make sure all guards are in position, correctly fitted and secure before starting work;
- make sure you, your employees or your contractors are properly trained in the safe use of the baler and have seen this sheet;
- always have a safe system of work for dealing with any problems that arise with the baler. This may be written and form part of your written safety policy but should include as a minimum a **safe** system for clearing any blockages that do occur and a safe system for rethreading the baler;
- make sure anyone working on the baler has read and understood and follows the manufacturer's instructions;
- spread out large clumps. If the windrow is uneven or is damaged by weather move it or reform it;
- use the tailgate ram prop when working under the rear door.

Guarding

- Manufacturers and suppliers have responsibilities under the Supply of Machinery (Safety) Regulations 1992 (as amended) or section 6 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to supply an adequately guarded machine. They should also have considered BS EN ISO 4254-1 and BS EN 704 (to be superseded by BS EN ISO 4254-11).
- Guards should prevent contact with any dangerous part of the machine when it is in motion or use. Guards should be fitted at the front, sides and rear of the machine to guard chains, sprockets, rollers and other parts which can cause injury.
- The pick-up reel guard should extend in front of the tines. Guarding should also prevent access at the sides and between the pick-up reel guard rail and the top of the bale chamber.

General guidance

- Avoid baling wet or damp hay and straw as this causes blockages. Some manufacturers supply pick-ups for use on wet hay or silage.
- Avoid baling light material in windy conditions and when starting to form a fresh bale. This can lead to poor core forming and uneven bales.
- Be patient if baling short late cut grass for silage.
- Make use of relevant Lantra courses and manufacturers'/dealers' courses. They will help ensure the safe and efficient use of your baler.
- Make the instruction manual available to the operator. The manual should give instructions on clearing blockages, rethreading and dealing with poor core forming.

Further information

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