

An In-Depth Look at Cotton Bales

It takes a lot of work and processing to bring raw, field cotton from the farmland to our homes, in its final form in a variety of products ranging from clothing and linens to nonwoven products like feminine hygiene and baby care.

In the course of reading about cotton at any point in the supply and distribution chain, you'll often see the term "bale" referenced, as a unit for referencing cotton. In today's article, we'll take an in-depth look at cotton bales.

What is a bale of cotton?

The term bale represents a unit of cotton that has been ginned (combed into fiber and freed of any seeds and other debris, known in the industry as trash).

How much does a bale of cotton weigh? What is the size of a bale of cotton?

In 2001, the Joint Cotton Industry Bale Packaging Committee (JCIBPC), established guidelines to clarify the standard dimensions of cotton bales compressed to US Gin Universal Density Bale standards. Ginners thus make a uniform size and weight product that is 480 pounds, 54 inches long, 20 inches wide and a tie width of about 33 inches (there are allowable variations based on the fact that cotton is a natural product

and not man-made).. The standard-sized cotton bale yields roughly 17 cubic feet of cotton fiber.

How is a bale of cotton produced?

Cotton arrives in bulk at the gin, which is basically a center for processing cotton into usable fiber form. The raw cotton, known as lint, is processed and combed into a straight fiber and placed in a bale press to package it in large, round bales according to the aforementioned standard measurements. Cotton is by nature a sustainable product, as the seeds removed from the lint are sent to other facilities to be pressed into cottonseed oil.

How much is a bale of cotton worth?

The price of cotton is determined by a number of factors. First and foremost, cotton is traded on the commodities markets, where prices fluctuate daily on during the week on factors like expected crop yields, weather events that may affect harvest, and more.

More foundational to the price of cotton is the notion of quality, which is itself determined by a variety of factors agreed upon by members of the industry. These factors include uniformity, leaf, staple length, color, micronaire, strength, and trash content. Depending on the application, some factors can be more important than others. For example, color is very important with clothing, strength may be important for products like drapes.

Cotton Bales Price

As of today's writing, cotton is trading for roughly 75 cents per pound. This means that a bale of upland cotton costs roughly \$360.

In conclusion, the cotton bale is simply the foundation of our entire industry. The continued standardization in sizing and quality measures ensures a level playing field for all industry participants as we continue to serve a wide variety of needs for the planet, from clothing and nonwoven care products to sheets, towels, and many other products.