

PRODUCER RESPONSES TO THE SQUARE BAGGER

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Introduction

The Hettinger Research Extension Center (HREC) purchased a square bagger in the fall of 1998 for use of the HREC. It was apparent that as the industry was being required to make relatively hasty switches from both the conventional tube type sacker and from jute packs to film packs that there was considerable producer resistance to change. Producer concern was magnified by the reduced market price for raw wool as a commodity. There had been indications in the past that this change was coming but when attempts were made to change the packaging of raw wool it always reverted back to the old standard and many producers assumed that the same would happen once again. Very little research and development had to be deployed to meet the needs of spring shearing for the year 1999. The HREC made their bagger available to a number of producers in the area for the sake of collecting some preliminary response to the equipment and the process. Producers also paid an upkeep fee for the use of the equipment.

Procedure

Producers were able to pick up the equipment at the HREC or arrange for its use through a local shearing crew. Producers paid their fees directly to the HREC or through their shearer. They were required to fill out a short survey as a contingency of use. Head count was included on the survey form to see if there was any difference in the response base on size of operation. The survey consisted of four main questions with the opportunity to make comments relative to each question. The scale for the questions was 1-10 with 1 being good or acceptable and 10 being unacceptable. An overall comment section was also made available to producers to respond in any way that they wished.

Summary

Wool from 5,699 head of sheep was packaged as resources of this survey. Approximately 120 bags of raw wool were packaged in film packs by the equipment. Producers were very cooperative in responding to the questions posed and many offered comments. Some of the questions were not scored by producers due to a number of reasons, usually because it did not apply to their operation. The intent of this collection of data was to provide producers some level of insight on the application of this new technology and how other producers have responded to it.

Survey

1. Question number one was **Rate ease of use of square bagger as compared to conventional round baggers**. Average numerical response was 3.9

Comments:

- a. Easier
- b. Does a nice job
- c. Bags are easier to close
- d. Easier because you don't have to change bags as often
- e. Relatively easy to use, just throw in fleece and operate
- f. Faster

2. Question number two was **Rate durability of film packs as compared to round jute bags.** Average numerical response was 4.56

Comments:

- a. Getting better as improvements have been made in size and durability
- b. Not as durable
- c. Did not use (used old poly packs)
- d. If they are put in properly they didn't tear
- e. Tears out at corners too easily
- f. They are a lot stronger
- g. Holes in plastic tend to enlarge
- h. More durable than jute

3. Question number three was **Rate ease of handling and storage on the ranch for square film packs.** Average numerical responses was 3.63

Comments:

- a. Easy to store
- b. Storage is simple but you need a loader to handle
- c. Not as easy to handle because of weight and not able to roll them
- d. Not applicable
- e. Easier to stack
- f. Easy to transport

4. Question number four was **Rate the process and impact on your operation.** Average numerical response was 4.4

Comments:

- a. Not much impact other than increase costs
- b. Costs not commensurate with returns
- c. Did not use as many bags
- d. Works really well except for trying to get the hooks in the top
- e. Very modern and dependable but may not be practical for small operations
- f. Less bulk

Over all comments:

- a. Too expensive to own
- b. I was impressed with the machine but cost prohibitive for the small producer
- c. Should have a pressure gauge on the hydraulics to help judge when the bag is full
- d. The producer is forced to package wool differently without any extra money returned
- e. Worked fairly well
- f. Plug fouled out, some bags ripped in the corner, bags seemed a little small, but they handled more easily, thought it worked excellently
- g. It's not bad but I hate not being able to make my own choice (square vs round)
- h. Worked fine

***Similar answers were not recorded more than once as the data was not to be statistically analyzed.**

Summary and Conclusions

Response to this change in technology was not difficult for producers to accept and as they worked with the equipment they indicated general acceptance. Problems with the equipment centered mostly on lack of good measures of fullness of the bag. **Note:** A small flimsy scale that came as a part of the bagger was removed by the HREC prior to any producers having a chance to evaluate it. A more dependable model may have to be added. Problems with materials centered on bag strength and size and there seemed to be steady improvement throughout the shearing season. **Conclusion: Changing to square baggers and film packs should not negatively impact producers with sizable operations, however, small producers and collective marketing structures (such as wool pools) could be impacted and the industry should work to assist these groups.**