

Correct ballast, bale height and the proper loader attachment help reduce the risks when handling large bales.



PHOTO: VANN CLEVELAND

LOW and Slow

That's AGCO's motto for transporting large hay bales.

Dealing with large bales presents several hazards. There is the chance of a side rollover or having a bale roll back onto the tractor operator or the tractor cab area if the bale is not properly restrained.

Tony Fox, product safety manager for AGCO Corp., says that as the popularity of

large bales has increased in recent years, so has the risk of injury when handling them. Fox says that the risk of a side rollover is the reason he suggests taking it "low and slow" when transporting large bales. Carrying the load too high can raise the tractor's center of gravity so the tractor can tip over on rough or hilly terrain.

"The risk of a side rollover increases if the load is carried too high, particularly when turning sharply," he notes. "Some of the large round bales weigh as much as 3,300 pounds. That would be like trying to carry a Chevy Impala around on the front of your tractor."

Although Fox sug-

gests carrying the load low, he cautions that it should be carried high enough to clear obstacles or the pavement. Also, be sure to use the correct ballasting. The operator's manual has recommendations.

Another hazard of handling large bales is the potential for injury to bystanders and damage to property if the bale is not properly secured.

Use proper attachments to help stabilize the load and make sure it is properly secured. Never use a chain or similar device to secure a bale to a front loader.

"We recommend using an approved spear, clamp or grapple to secure the bale," says Fox. "[Rollover protective structures] and canopies are not designed to protect against a bale drop."

Finally, make sure loads do not obscure lighting, marking and visibility—for example, lights and slow-moving-vehicle emblems. ▲

- ▶ **Move wheels** to the widest practical setting.
- ▶ **Feather the controls** to stop and start the loader arms gradually when lowering or lifting the loader.
- ▶ **Add ballast** to the tractor to balance front or rear loads as recommended in the tractor operator's manual.
- ▶ **Always use** the most level route when transporting heavy loads.
- ▶ **Stay clear** of electrical lines.
- ▶ **Never transport** or lift anyone on the loader or loader attachments.
- ▶ **Make sure** ROPS is installed to protect the operator against a rollover. A ROPS does not provide protection from improperly secured loads.
- ▶ **Use approved** bale attachment.