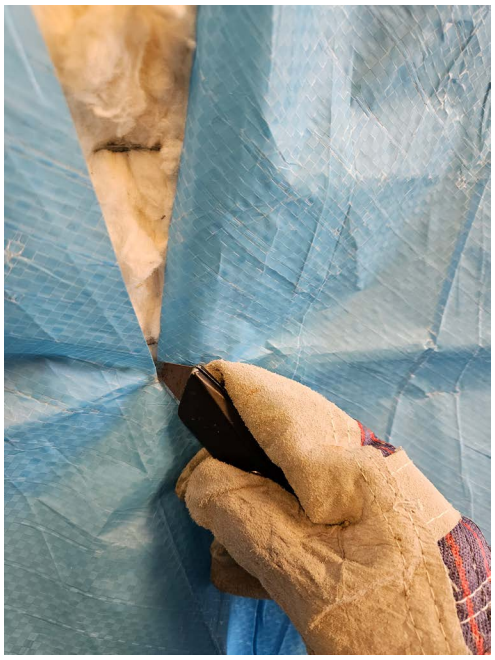
Best Management Practices to Reduce Contamination During Bale Opening in a Mill

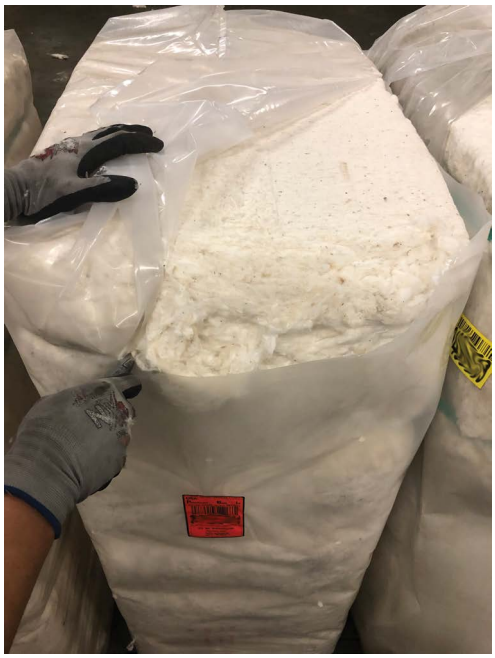
The prevention of plastic contamination is a top priority for U.S. cotton. When bales are delivered to a mill and bagging is cut open, there is potential to introduce plastic into the fiber. Proper cutting procedures are important to keep the bagging intact and to reduce the risk of contamination in the cotton.



Most mills will use utility knives or box cutters to open the bales. Making sure to use ***new, sharp blades*** and replace blades on a regular interval will help to cut the bags more cleanly. When cutting the bag, ***one long consistent cut*** is best. If the bagging is cut multiple times or hacked with the blade, it can cause fraying and can allow small plastic fragments to make their way into the cotton. If sampling the bale but not opening it for use, it is essential to tape up the cut edges before patching the hole.

Safety is of the upmost importance—making sure workers are using eye protection and gloves will help to prevent any accidents in the opening room.

It is important to visually inspect open bales for dirt, grease, debris, wet/spoiled cotton, extraneous matter, plastic wrap and PET strap shavings. Equip laydown crews with cleaning tools/brushes and encourage prompt action to clean bales before placing them into the laydown. Good housekeeping is needed in the bale warehouse, bale traffic areas, laydown staging areas and bale unwrapping stations to keep contamination at bay.



U.S. cotton bale packaging follows strict guidelines that are constantly monitored for quality. The Bale Packaging Specifications are updated annually and posted on the National Cotton Council's Bale Packaging webpage located: https://www.cotton.org/tech/bale/specs/index.cfm.

Please direct any bale packaging questions or contamination concerns to Lauren Krogman at the National Cotton Council at (901) 274-9030 or lkrogman@cotton.org. Additionally, NCC's Cotton Contamination Incident Report is available to all mills who would like to confidentially share contamination issues they encounter: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/XDK8ZDX.

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