

Keeping cotton “contamination free” remains a high priority goal for the U.S. cotton industry. The National Cotton Council (NCC) is reaching out to growers, ginners and warehousemen with the message about the critical importance of keeping U.S. cotton clean and pure. Please note that additional contamination prevention materials can be found on the NCC Quality Preservation web page (<http://www.cotton.org/tech/quality/index.cfm>). The Prevention of Plastic Contamination chaptered training video can be found on our YouTube Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-oHuB67IjtSNakjZAQ7f6QfLalPzIkKc>).

## Guidelines for Cotton Growers

### Pre-Harvest

- Create a watch list for foreign materials:
  - Plastics (i.e. mulches, poly irrigation ditch liners and pipe);
  - Roadside debris (i.e. shopping bags, articles of clothing or other fabrics);
  - Grease or oily residues; and
  - Other (i.e. accumulated leaf, sand/dust, spindle twist, etc.)
- Inspect fields and remove materials that could be picked up by harvesting equipment.
- Thoroughly clean and, if necessary, power wash harvest equipment.

### Harvest

- Utilizing the watch list, train harvest crews and other field workers to police the fields and understand the consequences of allowing harvesting equipment to pick up foreign material.
- Inspect harvesting equipment daily (i.e. check for hydraulic leaks or grease in areas that come in contact with seed cotton, foreign materials on picker spindles or stripper rollers, etc.).
- Do not allow modules to be built or dropped at locations where potential contaminants will be picked up with the modules. Unacceptable locations include areas with standing or shredded stalks.
- Use a method to identify modules that does not require the marking of seed cotton.

## Guidelines for Cotton Warehouses

### Pre-Harvest

- Create a warehouse watch list for foreign materials (see grower guidelines)
- Make sure all areas that are used to store or work cotton bales are clean and free of foreign materials, i.e., grease, oil, grime, etc.
- Make sure the hydraulic systems on lift trucks and other equipment are leak free.

### Harvest

- Utilizing the watch list, train warehouse employees to inspect bales on arrival and let gins know when foreign materials are found in or on bales.
- Use unloading, moving, stacking and loading techniques that preserve bale packaging materials and lint.
- Maintain a facility that is clean and use equipment that is maintained in a manner that ensures bales leave the facility in acceptable condition.
- Refer to “A Guide for Cotton Bale Standards” for additional information concerning generally acceptable bale conditions.

## Guidelines for Cotton Gins

### Pre-Harvest

- Create a gin watch list for foreign materials (see grower guidelines)
- Inspect premises and remove foreign materials.
- Keep areas in and around module feeders clear of all debris.
- Renovate module storage yards as needed to avoid sources of potential contaminants.
- Train gin crews on safe techniques for removing and inspecting module covers and wraps.
- Double check all hydraulic equipment -- with a special emphasis on hydraulic hoses, connections, couplings, cylinder seals and pumps -- looking for and repairing all leaks.

### Harvest

- Monitor module moving equipment to make sure floors, chains, spears, etc., do not cause seed cotton contamination or damage module covers and wraps.
- Monitor module storage yards to make sure windblown debris is not picked up with modules.
- Make sure module covers and wraps are completely removed prior to ginning.
- Gins should have, at a minimum, one camera system on the module feeder bed and one at the dispersing cylinders.
- Frequently inspect the area in and around the module feeder for foreign matter. **KEEP THIS AREA CLEAN!**
- Safeguard workers when removing potential contaminants from machinery. Shut down a piece of equipment, or the entire gin if needed, until the job is complete.
- Utilizing the watch list, avoid the reintroduction of non-cotton foreign materials into the lint stream.
- Make sure all gin employees understand that seed cotton and lint streams are not refuse receptacles.
- Make sure gin employees understand the importance of watching for and reporting to their supervisor any foreign materials in seed cotton and lint.

## Post-Harvest Guidelines: All Groups

- Review contamination prevention programs and determine if acceptable results were achieved.
- Determine what actions are needed to strengthen contamination prevention programs in the future.
- Update foreign materials watch list.

**The battle to prevent contamination never ends and consistent efforts are needed by everyone to achieve the goal of contamination-free cotton.**