

Livestock Market Operator Responsible for Weights



P&SP Resident Agent Monitoring Weighing

In the intricate, competitive world of livestock marketing, no single factor is more important than accurate weights. Accurate scales and honest weighing protect the seller's right to fair value. They guard the buyer's right to equity.

It is the primary responsibility of the market or buying station operator to see that both parties receive accurate weights. He or she may delegate the actual weighing to others, but the operator is the one who is held responsible for the results. The material in this pamphlet is intended to help weighmasters, market operators, and buying station operators to do their jobs better.

P&SP's Programs for Accurate Weighing

Packers and Stockyards Program (P&SP) has three programs to improve weighing accuracy in the livestock industry:

Scale Testing

All livestock scales subject to the Packers and Stockyards Act (P&S Act) must be tested for accuracy by a competent agency at least each 6 months.

- Any scale found to have an error greater than plus or minus one scale division for each 500 scale divisions of test load must be repaired and retested before it is used again to weigh livestock.

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Weighing Investigations

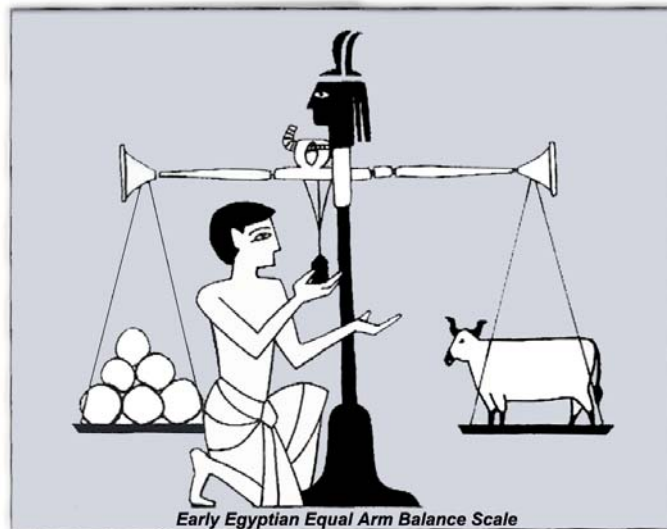
- Direct sale investigations of weighing accuracy are conducted by agency personnel to detect incorrect weighing. Animals are pre-weighed, then “sold” to the market to check reliability of its weighing practices.
- Check-weighing is used at other times. Investigators reweigh animals to see if the weights given by the market are consistent and accurate. False weighing is unlawful and subject to civil penalty. Legal action may be brought if incorrect weighing is found.

Weighmaster Training

Competent weighmasters are absolutely essential to good weighing. P&SP provides instructional material and, in cooperation with State weights and measures officials, conducts training schools to explain official instructions and correct procedures to livestock weighmasters. Some States require weighmasters to be registered and bonded.

History of Weights and Measures

Throughout the ages accurate weights and measures have played a crucial role in the way people dealt with their neighbors. Accurate scales were early recognized as an impartial judge of quantity. Without this impartial judge as the link between buyer and seller, meaningful advances in trade and commerce would have been impossible.

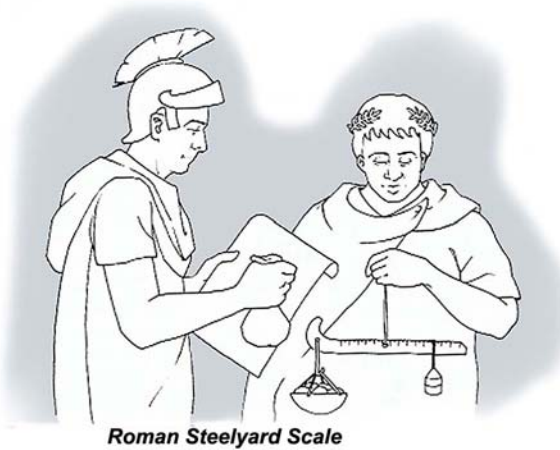


Egyptians were using variations of the equal arm balance scale in trade as early as 7,000 years ago.

But as valuable as it was, the equal arm balance scale was limited by having to place at the opposite end of the lever a weight equal to that of the object being weighed.

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The next important step in the development of reliable weighing was the invention of the steelyard scale. By using an unequal lever arrangement and small ratio weights, a high-capacity load could be weighed with reasonable accuracy and ease.



This type of scale was in use among the Romans as early as 200 B.C.

The next significant advance waited until 1830 for Thaddeus Fairbanks, an inventive genius who needed a large capacity scale on which to weigh hemp and other bulky trade items.

He attached a series of multiplying levers to the steelyard scale, enlarged the platform, and overcame one of the serious hurdles to weighing large objects. He found that the scale platform could be enlarged until a horse and a wagon loaded with hay could be weighed.

Modern weighing devices employ electronic sensors to determine weights. These sensors provide greater flexibility in the design, use, and location of weighing devices. The use of electronic devices has made it possible to weigh objects in motion and, by interfacing with computers, to transmit sale weights directly to the accounting.

Livestock Scale Selection and Installation

Selecting the correct type of livestock scale and installing it properly will eliminate many problems before they begin. This should provide the foundation for many years of reliable weights. The following points are offered as guidelines when installing a new livestock scale or during relocation of an existing scale. For more information, contact your P&SP Regional Office. (See locations at the end of this publication.)

Selecting a Scale

- Weighbeam, dial, digital, and electronic indicators are all acceptable; however, the scale must be equipped to issue a printed ticket.
- The minimum scale division for most livestock scales can be no greater than 5 pounds. Markets handling a large number of single heads of calves, sheep, or hogs should

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consider installing a separate single animal scale with 1-pound divisions to weigh such livestock.

Scale Capacity

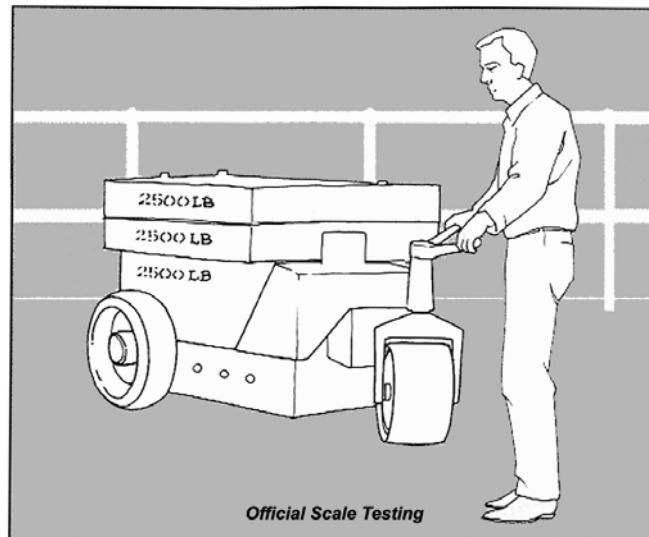
Select a scale with a platform large enough to accommodate the larger drafts of animals normally weighed at the market.

Use the following formula to determine the size of scale platform that will be needed:

- Cattle, 110 pounds per square foot;
- Calves or hogs, 70 pounds per square foot;
- Sheep and lambs, 50 pounds per square foot. For example, a 7' x 15' platform (inside dimensions) contains 105 square feet and would handle an 11,550-pound draft of cattle.
- Carefully Select Your Scale Location

Location

Locate scale for most efficient use in the marketing operation. Avoid using it for an alleyway or traffic center because this produces costly, unnecessary wear. The scale site should be selected so that surface water will drain away.



Easy Access

P&SP requires that livestock scales be tested officially two times a year. Provisions should be made to permit ready access to the scales for large capacity scale testing equipment. The approaches to the scale should be straight, level, and on the same plane as the scale platform.

This will make it possible to move the heavy, 500- to 2,500-pound test weights onto the platform for accurate testing. It will also make repair and maintenance easier.

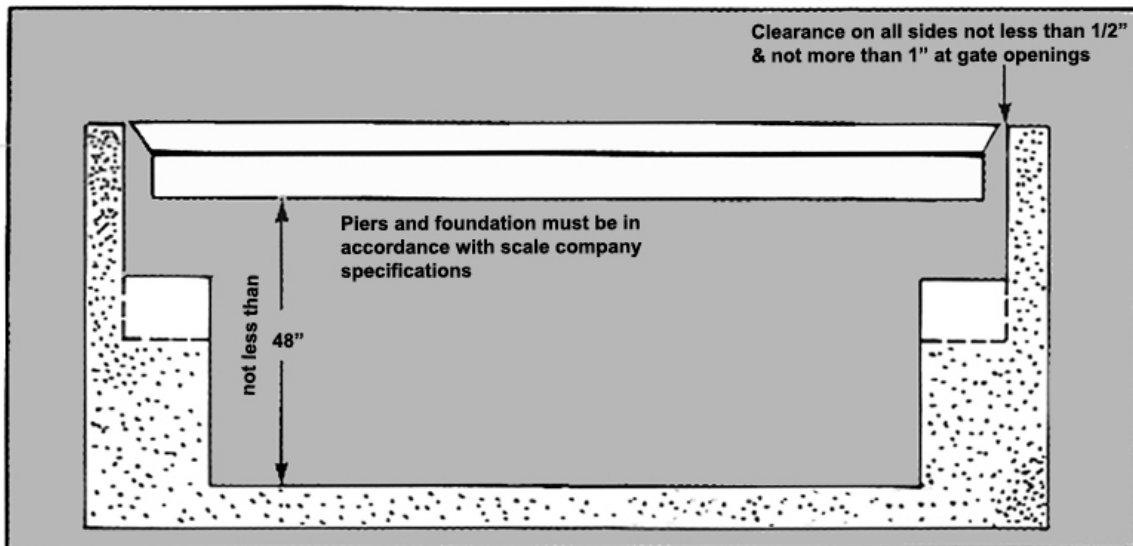
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Scale Installation

Pit

Accurate weighing begins in a properly constructed scale pit. The pit should be deep enough — 4 to 6 feet — to permit easy access for inspection and maintenance. It should be well drained. Install a sump pump if good drainage is not possible. Water in the scale pit will make accurate weighing impossible. It also results in costly repairs.

- Keep levers painted to prevent rust.
- Use special lubricating grease on pivots and bearings.



Side View of a Scale Pit

Platform

A non-slip surface, such as brushed or scored concrete, is recommended. A clearance of 1/2 to 3/4 inch is recommended between the platform and pit walls.

Stock Rack

Steel construction is preferred. Rack must be firmly anchored to the platform so that animals are completely enclosed. Rack must not touch surrounding fences or buildings. Gates should be designed for rapid, easy operation, and equipped with positive latches. They should swing free. Dragging gates are one of the most common causes of poor weighing.

Visibility

Weighbeam, dial, or electronic indicators must be protected from the weather. However, the indicator must be easily visible to interested parties. The weighmaster also should be able to see the entire scale platform from his or her station.

Weighing Procedures under the Packers and Stockyards Act (P&S Act)

The weighmaster who consistently weighs livestock accurately is one of the most valuable employees a market operator can have. A livestock scale is not only a money measuring machine, but also a reputation machine. Accurate weights build confidence in a market. But accurate scales, properly installed and maintained, are only the beginning.

The market operator should not permit untrained persons to weigh livestock. It takes a competent, trained weighmaster, using good equipment, to produce accurate weights. It is also the market operator's responsibility to see that his or her weighmaster complies with any licensing and bonding laws of the operator's own State. The weighmaster, when weighing livestock, should:

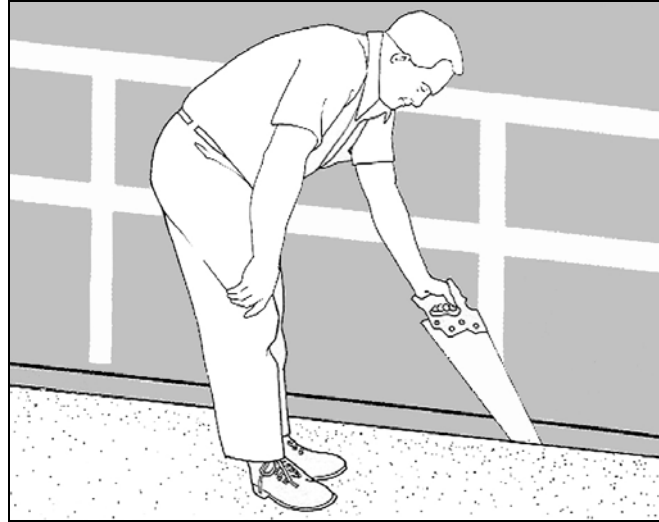
- Keep scale balanced at zero at all times.
- Check zero balance every 15 minutes or 15 drafts, and after every draft of more than half scale capacity. Show time of zero balance check on scale ticket.
- Weigh each draft of livestock accurately to the nearest scale division.
- Favor neither buyer nor seller.
- Print scale ticket only while livestock is on scale.
- Issue scale ticket showing all required information.
- Allow all persons having legitimate interest in a draft of livestock to observe the weighing.
- Reweigh draft of livestock immediately, or recheck zero balance, if requested.
- Understand the detailed instructions in the regulations (9 CFR201.73-1)

Items to Check before Weighing Livestock

The weighmaster should conduct a pre-weighing check to make sure that the scale is ready to deliver accurate weights. Remember these points:

Pit

- Free from water touching part of scale mechanism.
- Free from rats or other animals.
- Free from debris or other foreign material.



Checking for Objects between Platform and Pit Wall

Any objects touching the weighing mechanism will affect weighing results. No weighmaster can weigh accurately under such conditions.

Platform

- Edges free from binds against pit walls. Check for small stones or other foreign objects lodged between the platform and pit walls.
- Check that gates are not dragging.
- No animals (chickens, dogs, etc.) other than those being weighed should be allowed around the platform while weighing is being conducted.

Weighing Elements

- Beam rod should be free from interference.
- Weighbeam should be clean, clear from binds. Notches and poises should be wiped and brushed.
- Remove any foreign material (loose bolts, washers, etc.) from the weighbeam assembly. Any such material on any part of the assembly is a potential source of weighing error.
- Loose balancing material should be placed in the shot cup provided in the counter balance hanger.
- If scale is equipped with a "score board indicator," make sure all lights are working.
- Switch on heating element early so dial or balance indicator will function properly in cold weather.

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Surroundings

Maintain a constant check to prevent observers from leaning, propping, or hanging anything on scale rack and platform while weighing is being done.

Weighing Pre-Check

- Balance empty scale at zero. Scales must also be balanced whenever a new weighmaster comes on duty, or whenever the weighmaster has been absent from the scale.
- Check the scale's sensitivity before weighing begins. Check this at least twice during the day. For more detailed information on this subject, consult the Packers and Stockyards Act, and Regulations.(9 CFR 201.73-1)

Scale Ticket Requirements under the P&S Act

The scale ticket is a legal document. Every record that is issued from the livestock market depends on a complete, accurate scale ticket.

The ticket must contain these items:

- Date of weighing.
- Name of weighing agency.
- Correct name of seller.
- Correct name of buyer.
- Number of head.

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- Kind of livestock.
- Correct weight of livestock.
- Name or initials of weighmaster. P&SP requires only initials except in States that require full name. In these cases, P&SP adopts the State rule.
- Scale tickets must be serially numbered and used in sequence.
- Issue scale tickets with sufficient copies to provide a copy for each party to the transaction. Where weights are automatically recorded on the account of sale or other basic record, scale tickets are not required.
- Keep all voided tickets and balance check tickets.
- Lock up scale tickets when not in use to prevent theft or misuse.

Additional information may be shown on the scale ticket if desired, such as price paid, etc. However, the information listed above must be shown to make a complete legal record.

LIVESTOCK					
REG. WEIGHT	NO. HEAD	KIND	PEN	PRICE	WEIGHT AMOUNT
3 5 45	14	But	11		253 4083
Owner		Suehen Sw		Weigher	89C
Purchaser				Date	7-27-05
STOCK YARDS SUPPLY CO., INC.					

PRODUCERS, INC.			
Knot on jaw		129744	
12:18 pm 07/26/05 Tue/Ot		915 lb Gross	
CATTLE	CALVES	HOGS	SHEEP
Heif	cow		
PRICE		SOLD BY:	
		SOLD TO:	
TAG NOS. 4944			
PEN NO.	COMMENTS:	WEIGHER	

Examples of Scale Tickets

Weigher's Acknowledgment and Agreement

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All persons who operate scales on which livestock is weighed for buying or selling purposes must supply copies of official instructions to all persons who perform weighing operations for them. Weighers must familiarize themselves with these instructions and comply with them at all times.

Weighers should acknowledge receipt of these instructions and agree to comply with them by signing forms provided by P&SP (P&SP – 4000 for Livestock, or P&SP – 4100 for Poultry). Obtain copies of the form (and other forms and instructions) by downloading it from the GIPSA web site at <http://www.gipsa.usda.gov>, or by contacting a Regional Office as listed below:

Packers and Stockyards Program Regional Offices

GIPSA, P&SP
Eastern Regional Office (National Office for Poultry)
Suite 230
75 Spring Street
Atlanta, GA 30303

Phone: 404-562-5840
Fax: 404-562-5848

Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Maryland, Maine, Mississippi, North Carolina, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Vermont, West Virginia

GIPSA, P&SP
Midwestern Regional Office (National Office for Hogs)
Federal Building
Room 317
210 Walnut Street
Des Moines, IA 50309

Phone: 515-323-2579
Fax: 515-323-2590

Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, Michigan, Missouri, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin

GIPSA, P&SP
Western Regional Office (National Office for Cattle and Sheep)
1 Gateway Centre
3950 Lewiston, Suite 200
Aurora, CO 80011

Phone: 303-375-4240
Fax: 303-371-4609

Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Washington, Wyoming

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Provisions under the Packers and Stockyards Act for Records and Weighing

The Packers and Stockyards Act (P&S Act) requires complete and accurate recordkeeping of persons subject to the P&S Act. Any such person who willfully:

- Makes false entries in records;
- Makes false entries in accounts;
- Neglects to make true; correct entries;
- Mutilates, alters, or falsifies any documentary evidence required to be kept;
- Refuses to allow inspection of records by authorized agents.

Any person found guilty of such an offense against the United States is subject to a fine, or to imprisonment, or to both a fine and imprisonment.

Weighers, who willfully print or enter a false weight on a scale ticket or other record of a stockyard company, market agency, dealer, or packer, are subject to the penalties under of the P&S Act.

Regulations issued under the authority of the P&S Act further spells out the obligation of weighers, stockyard operators, market agencies, dealers, and packers to operate scales according to official instructions.

Any person found to be operating scales incorrectly, carelessly, in violation of instructions, or in any manner favoring or injuring any party or agency through incorrect weighing or incorrect weight recording shall be relieved of weighing duties.

The GIPSA toll-free telephone **HOTLINE for reporting violations and abuses in the livestock, meat, and poultry industries is **1-800-998-3447**.**

For additional information about Packers and Stockyards Program, visit the GIPSA website at <http://www.gipsa.usda.gov> .