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Crop farmers demand accurate truckload weighing systems

Extremely accurate axle pad weigh systems, even for large B-Trains, help farmers account for every pound of product and inputs.

With the size and volume of farms getting larger, often up to 10,000 acres or more, even small errors in accuracy of weighing product and

inputs can make a major impact on the bottom line. Yet many farmers are far from the nearest load scale or rely on grain cart spindle scales or volumetric measurements whose accuracy is often less than desired.

As an alternative, more farmers in the U.S. and Canada are turning to

axle pad scales, which allow them to quickly check weigh product in the truck right off the fields before it goes to market or the grain bin, which can prevent costly overweight load fines. The axle pad scales also enable farmers to check weigh input costs on receipt to ensure accuracy,

as well as benchmark and optimize productivity by verifying the accuracy of farm equipment.

"Accurately weighing the load on a triple axle B-Train semi-trailer before it goes to market can prevent an overweight ticket that could pay for the axle pad scale," says Rod Swystun, owner of a large grain farm, north of Blaine Lake in Saskatchewan.

"I use the Massload scale in my farm yard to verify the weight load of semi-trailers going to market, the accuracy of my field yield monitor, and the capacity of my grain dryer and grain cleaner."

Better Than Grain Bin Estimates

Though built-in spindle scales are common in new grain carts and air seeder carts, due to mechanical constraints in design they are not as accurate as advertised for measuring weight. Also, volumetric measurement of contents of grain storage bins is inexact and not of much help to those needing to measure more accurately.

"Volumetric measuring is just 'guesstimates' because the actual weight can be misrepresented when there's chaff and foreign objects in a load," says Swystun.

For grain and crop farmers, it is easy to lose money on weight estimates. Unless there is a check weigh at the fields before the crop goes to market or to the storage bin, farmers may have no way to detect if key measurements are off or even if the entire load safely makes it to market or storage.

Volumetric measuring also cannot help farmers check weigh their input costs for seed, fertilizer, and other items against their invoice receipt. With the value of crop farming doubling due to larger farms producing greater volumes of product over the last six years, even a small error in weighing can be costly.

"What we do at seeding time dictates our income for the year," says Gordon Spencer, who farms 3,500

acres of wheat, barley, peas, lentils, and canola in Saskatchewan.

"But the manufacturer's seed drill output rates were inaccurate so we had to recalibrate everything."

"When fertilizer is \$1,000/ton and amounts to a few hundred thousand dollars during the planting season, you don't want errors on those rates," adds Spencer. "Apply too much and it's wasted, too little and your income will be off on that field. Without our own scale to measure output, we estimated weight because driving to town to use a scale or weighing out piles of grain was too time consuming."

A better option for many farmers in the U.S. and Canada is to use axle pad scales, which allow easy dual-axle and tri-axle weighing of product in the truck before it goes to market or the storage bin, as well as weighing of inputs in the truck on receipt.

Spencer uses an above ground axle pad scale in a farmyard building to check seed drill rate settings each spring and to check that the combine is recording accurate data.

"Once we get seed drills adjusted and set for the product, it's quite reliable," says Spencer. "I got payback on our Massload axle pad scale in one spring planting season."

During harvest, we use the scale almost every day to check that the combine is recording accurate field yield data."

While axle weighing systems are not legal-for-trade, gathering weight data is quick and easy as the vehicle moves axle by axle over dual weigh pads and a total is given. This not only provides a check weigh to assure that all crop gets to market, and a check weigh against grain cart scales, but also a check weigh against input receipts, which can help benchmark input costs to optimize productivity. Use of axle pad scales at the farm can also help speed product to market or storage by minimizing the time

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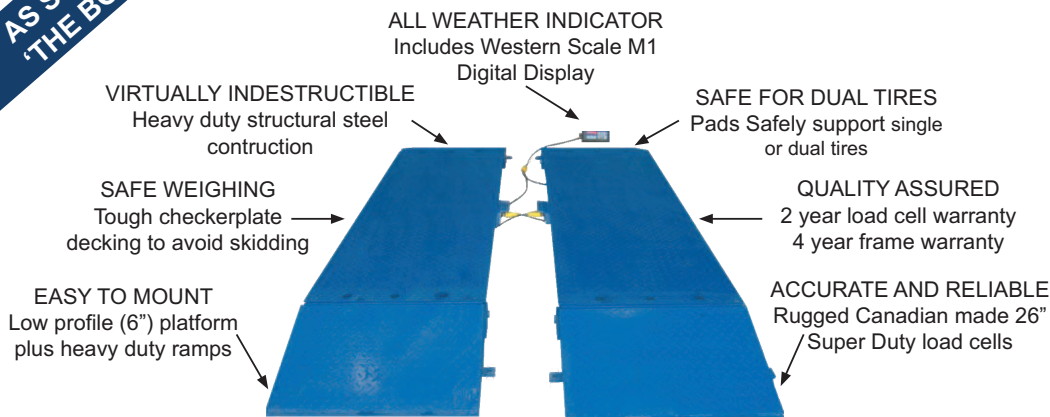


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Massload's axle pads offer accurate weigh checks of loads

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wasted at off-farm weighbridges.

"The accuracy of our Massload axle pad scale is improving our cost of production," says Spencer. "It's helping us to get the best output with the least input by applying the

right amount of seed and fertilizer to maximize our productivity."

But not all axle pad scales are constructed alike. To maximize use without premature troubleshooting or replacement, it is vital that certain components be robustly constructed and made to last for prolonged use

and severe weather conditions. The key components in axle pad scales are its load cells, which are located in the weigh pad platform and convert mechanical energy to electrical energy that is measured to determine weight.

Unfortunately, in some axle pad

scales made offshore, the load cells are sub-par and not individually tested. Often, these axle pad scales contain load cells that do not extend the full width of the weigh pad platform, which makes inaccurate measures more likely depending on truck axle weight placement. One offshore-built model, in fact, contains six small load cells, one in each corner and two in the center, which makes accuracy dependent on axle weight placement and multiplies the probability of one of the load cells failing by six-fold.

One innovative manufacturer of axle pad scales, Massload, a Saskatoon-based manufacturer of quality weighing systems, uses a 26" long load cell in its weigh pad that is essentially as wide as the platform. This provides accurate dual or triple axle weighing regardless of truck axle weight placement. These weigh pads have a very large weighing surface and low 6" profile, making them an easy method of determining truck axle weight. They can be used portably above ground at multiple locations or can be pit installed for permanent use.

Since the company's environmentally sealed double-ended shearbeam load cell is fully electronic, there are no moving parts to wear out or adjust. All gauges are individually tested and electronics done at its headquarters, which manufactures the only load cells of this type at a North American Verified Conformity Assessment Program (VCAP) certified facility. This allows its axle pad scales to weigh accurately and reliably to 0.25% in temperatures from -40°C to +57°C.

Unlike offshore manufacturers which typically use thin cable in their axle pad scales, the Canadian company also uses heavy-duty cable that can withstand temperature extremes without breaking to ensure prolonged use even in cold Canadian weather which can reach minus

40°C.

"The Massload axle pad scale works fine in -30°C outdoor weather and is holding up to a high volume of use," says Swystun.

For grain and crop farmers who want to account for every pound of their product and inputs by the truckload, the good news is that these axle pad scales come in several sizes that can handle even the large tri-axle, B-Train Double truck rig sizes favored by Canadians.

For example, while Massload's axle pad scales are all 30" wide and 6" high with an active weighing surface capacity of 30,000-40,000 lbs. per pad, their 84" long model weighs dual axles and their 144" long model weighs tri-axes.

Of particular interest to Canadian farmers, the company is the only one in the world that manufactures a 168" long axle pad scale capable of weighing the extra wide tri-axle B-Train rigs popular in Canada (whose axle sections to be weighed can each be more than 12' long).

While crop farmers may have believed that built-in grain cart spindle scales or volumetric measurements were sufficient, those who turn to accurate truckload, axle pad scale, weighing systems will have the advantage. By accounting for every pound of their product and inputs by the truckload, these farmers will add to their bottom line much faster than the competition.

For more info, call 1-855-912-2020 toll free in North America; Fax 306-931-1991; email axlepad@massload.com; or visit www.massload.com; or write to Massload Technologies Inc. at 301 47th Street East, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7K 5H2, Canada.

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