



PICK-UP BALERS

Hay crops are widely grown and represent one-fifth of all harvested crop acreage in the United States. This extensive acreage, which normally yields in excess of 100 million tons of hay, provides a big harvesting job.

Hay acreage is concentrated mainly in or adjacent to the dairy, beef cattle, and sheep-producing areas of the country. In some areas where the hay acreage is small in relation to land area, it makes up a large part of the total cropland harvested. In these areas, soil and climatic conditions are not suitable for extensive production of crops other than hay and grass. For example, in eastern Minnesota and northern Wisconsin, 80 to 90 percent of the cropland harvested in 1954 was in hay. In the southern parts of these States where corn and small grains are grown extensively, less than 40 percent of the cropland harvested was represented by land from which hay was cut. High proportions of the harvested cropland are in hay also in the colder portions of the Northeastern States, and in some of the irrigated areas of the Mountain and Western States.

The practice of baling hay began about the middle of the 19th century when a simple press operated by animal power was used. Steam power was first used to operate stationary hay presses, or balers, around 1885. These early balers were used primarily for baling both hay and straw from stacks and mows for shipment to cities and other off-farm places for use as feed for horses and mules, and some cattle.

The first baler for picking up and baling hay or straw from the windrow in the field was introduced around 1930. This early pick-up baler required manual tying and required a crew of 3 or

4 men for operation. Its use in the hay field eliminated the handling of loose hay at both harvest and feeding time. The baled hay requires less storage space than loose hay, and the bales facilitate the hauling and stacking in sheds, and in fields where rainfall is not a problem. About 10 years later the automatic-tie pick-up baler became a reality. This type of baler used twine for tying and was operated by one man. Savings in manpower was a big factor in the subsequent rapid increase in farms reporting pick-up balers. From 1950 to 1954 the number of farms reporting pick-up balers increased from 192,000 to 443,000. Since some farmers had more than one baler in both years, the increase in number of balers was somewhat greater than the number of farms reporting.

