

Know large-load law

By **HOLLY SPANGLER**

CONTRARY to popular belief, farm trucks can be pulled over and inspected by Illinois State Police, says State Trooper Todd Teel.

Any vehicle weighing more than 10,000 pounds loaded, or being operated by a company with eight or more people employed, is considered a commercial motor vehicle and is subject to inspection.

If any part of the truck is found out of compliance, the farmer will likely have to arrange for towing. Teel says it's a liability issue.

"I know farmers do their own repairs, and they want to drive the truck home to the shop and save money. But if I give them their papers, they head home, and Grandma blows a stop sign and gets killed, then they're going to be sued, so am I and so is the Illinois State Police," Teel explains.

Hauling large loads of grain continues to be a controversial subject in many parts of the state, and often, a confusing one. While state law provides a "five-mile access rule," State Trooper Lance Bonney reminds farmers that it isn't a blank check.



TROOPER TODD TEEL

"If you're coming from a state highway, you're given five miles on another state highway or posted county road — not any road," Bonney explains. "It's the liability. You don't have a five-mile blank check until they pass legislation allowing 80,000 pounds on all roads."

There are no exceptions for a truck over 73,280 pounds, Bonney says. "We understand that you're one of thousands doing it. But the problem is, if something happens, you're going to be hung."

Police answer top questions

ILLINOIS State Troopers Lance Bonney and Todd Teel offer answers to these common agricultural trucking questions.

Q: Do you need a name on farm semis, straight trucks?
A: No. It's not required, but we encourage it strongly.

Q: It's legal to haul grain home from the field with my auger wagon, right?

A: Not necessarily. Anything over 20,000 pounds with a single axle, on any road — even a quarter mile from field to home — is not legal. Auger wagons of that size are not meant to haul grain over the road.

Q: Do livestock trailers need to pull into weigh stations?

A: Yes, if your gross weight exceeds 16,000 pounds.

Q: How wide can loads of hay or straw be?

A: Up to 12 feet wide.

Q: Doesn't a slow-moving vehicle sign make it an "implement of husbandry," and make us exempt from weight limits?

A: No, and that's being strongly enforced. "Implements of husbandry" are limited to those with a gross weight of 36,000 pounds or less. We've heard of a hog confinement in central Illinois that put SMV signs on loads weighing 105,000 pounds, and tried to call them "implements of husbandry." They're not, and those guys are getting thousands of dollars in fines.

Q: When you inspect brake pads, what are you looking for?

A: They need to be at least ¼-inch thick and with no cracks or broken pieces. Wet or grease-soaked brake pads (from blown wheel seals) need to be changed.

Q: What is the road weight limit for a two-axle wagon?

A: As an "implement of husbandry," the two-axle wagon can legally haul 36,000 pounds. No special driver's license is required.

■ **Have a question you'd like answered? E-mail hspangler@farmprogress.com**

Who's exempt from Illinois Safety Tests?

- Farm machinery (but not farm-plated trucks)
- Trailers and semitrailers with gross weight of 5,000 pounds or less
- RVs (trailers, motor homes)
- Vehicles registered as and displaying "Antique Vehicle Plates"
- Vehicles registered as and displaying "Permanently Mounted Equipment Plates"
- Pole trailers and auxiliary axles
- Special mobile equipment (like anhydrous tanks)

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