



USDA AMS Cotton Program National Database Detailed Overview

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Cotton Program maintains a National Database (NDB) in Memphis, Tennessee for owner access to cotton classification data. The NDB is a computerized telecommunications system which allows owners or authorized agents of owners to retrieve classing data from the current crop and/or the previous four crops. The NDB stores classing information from all AMS cotton classing facilities.

How the National Database Works

The NDB is a batch processing system. Before connecting to the system, customers must create a request file on their computer containing user logon information and ranges of bale numbers they are requesting. The request file is uploaded and processed automatically upon a successful connection. A data file is then returned to the customer's computer. The data file is a text file with fixed length fields that can be easily imported or parsed by most programs. Software to process the retrieved records is **not** provided by the Cotton Program. The software can be obtained from other sources or developed by the customer. If needed, the Cotton Program provides a simple print program (printams) that can be used to print the retrieved records.

What Data is Available

All Form 1 Classing Office data is available from the NDB. The NDB stores data by gin code and gin bale number (e.g. Permanent Bale Identifier or PBI) for the current crop year and previous four crop years. Two types of requests can be made from the NDB. The first request is for data only and the second request is for a Form R.

The official cotton quality measurements include the official color grade, extraneous matter, remarks, leaf grade, length, strength, micronaire, length uniformity, color (instrument color grade, quadrant, Rd and +b) and trash on an individual bale basis. A more detailed description of the quality measurements can be accessed at the following web address:

www.ams.usda.gov/cotton/understand.htm

The Request File

The request file contains user logon information, optional Form R header information and a list of requested bale(s). The request file name is always **c:\natdb** (no extension). The NDB User Manual, which is supplied when an account is established, contains detailed file format information.

The first line in the request file always contains the 5 digit user number, password, owner flag, Form R flag and the not found flag.

For data only requests (non Form R), the additional lines contain PBI information (specified in bale number ranges) and a crop year flag (Current or Old). When Old crop is requested, the program will automatically search up to four years of Old crop databases, beginning with the most recent, before specifying the record as Not Found (NF). A Current crop request will only search the Current crop database. You can easily discern the crop year of the PBI record by examining the Date Classed on either the data file or the Form-R.

For Form R requests, the additional lines contain several header lines and a list of requested bales. The header lines contain name and address information of the current owner and warehouse of the bales to be printed. For each requested bale, the PBI, corresponding warehouse bale number and crop year flag must be supplied for the Form R.

The Cotton Program provides a program (balerang) that can be used to create the request file. Most customers have the ability to create the request file automatically from their software.

Example of the **c:\natdb** for Normal Telecommunications:

54321TESTUSERNY	User 54321, Password TESTUSER, (Owner, Form R, NF) flags
9999900000010000010C	Bale range of 1 to 10 for gin code 99999 (Current Crop)
999980000002500000250	Bale range of 25 to 25 for gin code 99998 (Old Crop)
99999000000300000040C	

Connecting to the National Database

In order to retrieve data from the system, callers must install software provided by the Cotton Program. Two versions of the software are currently available. The Internet version is provided at no cost and is the most widely used version. A Windows version is available for customers who do not have access to the Internet or want a backup connection method. The one-time cost for the Windows software is \$40.00. Cotton Program software, operating instructions and technical support are supplied with both versions. Both versions of the software require access to the root (c:\) folder for file transfers. The Internet version requires a Java enabled browser (Internet Explorer or Netscape) with 128 bit SSL encryption capability.

The request file is uploaded and processed automatically upon a successful connection. A data file is then returned to the customer's computer.

Data File

The returned data file is always **c:\ams01** (no extension) and contains the requested quality information for bale record(s) found. The data file is a text file with fixed length fields that can be easily imported or parsed by most programs. Detailed file layouts are included with the software for the request file (natdb) and the returned data file (ams01). The data file is returned for both data only and Form R requests. Since the ams01 file is overlaid each time a connection is made, customers must process data

in the ams01 file before connecting to the NDB again. Data not processed will be lost (overlaid) at the time of the next download. The cost of providing data is \$0.05 per record found.

Example of the c:\ams01 file until June 30, 2005:

```
999990000008200407020000000000323231 23.43      31376092 01 099 7910-0665
999990000009200407020000000000423231 23.6311     31376092 02 100 7710-1190
999990000005320040702000000000523332 23.6411     32272099 04 104 7710-1585
NF9999900000054C
NF9999900000055C
9999900000056200407020000000000323132 22.53      31376091 01 098 8010-0745
```

Example of the c:\ams01 file beginning July 1, 2005:

```
99999000000820040702000000003232312343000031376209201099791100-0665
99999000000920040702000000004232312363110031376309202100774101-1190
999990000005320040702000000005233322364110032272109904104773101-1585
NF9999900000054C
NF9999900000055C
999990000005620040702000000003231322253000031376409101098801100-0745
```

The lines beginning with “NF” indicate requested records that were not found. NF records are returned unless the optional NF flag in set to “N” in the logon record.

Form R (Printed Report)

Customers may also obtain a certified classification document (Form R) from the National Database in addition to telecommunications. Customers select which quality factors are printed on each Form R by setting the appropriate flag in the request file. The data file (c:\ams01) is returned immediately while the Form R reports are mailed out daily. The cost of the Form R includes shipping the report by U. S. mail. If overnight service is requested, the customer must supply their FEDEX account number to cover shipping charges. The cost of providing the Form R is \$0.15 per bale, with a minimum fee of \$5.00 per page. A full page contains 50 records (\$7.50).

Example of a Form R report:

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FORM CN-358                                UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE                                MEMO. NO. 89-00000
7-1-1998                                AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE                                PAGE 1
***** WAREHOUSE *****                                COTTON PROGRAM NATIONAL DATABASE                                ***** OWNER *****
Test Warehouse                                MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE                                ***** Test Owner
3275 Appling Road                                FORM R CLASSIFICATION MEMORANDUM                                * OWNERS MARKS * 3275 Appling Road
Memphis, TN 38133                                * Test Mark * Memphis, TN 38133
*****
THE OWNER CERTIFIES THAT THE WAREHOUSE BALE NUMBERS AND CORRESPONDING GIN BALE NUMBERS IDENTIFY THE SAME BALES OF COTTON.
***** QUALITY FACTORS DESIGNATED "NA" ARE OMITTED AT THE REQUEST OF THE OWNER *****
WAREHOUSE GIN      GIN      DATE      BALES OFF COL LENGTH      LEAF      EXT./      - HVI COLOR -      LENGTH LENGTH RECORD
BALE CODE  BALE  CLASSED  MODULE MO/TR  GRADE  (32ND) MIKE STRENGTH GRADE REMARKS GRADE RD  +B TRASH (100TH) UNIFORM TYPE
0000001 99001 9999999 12/22/2004 S      21      38      44      35.4      2      21-1 80 091 01 118 82 U 0
0000002 99001 9999998 12/22/2004 S      21      38      45      35.3      2      21-1 80 091 01 119 82 U 0
0000003 99001 9999997 12/22/2004 S      11      37      44      36.3      2      11-2 81 090 01 116 82 U 0
0000004 99001 9999996 12/22/2004 S      11      37      44      34.0      2      11-1 82 087 02 117 84 U 0
0000005 99001 9999995 12/22/2004 S      11      38      45      33.4      2      11-2 82 086 02 119 83 U 0
*****
PURSUANT TO THE REGULATIONS OF THE U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FOR COTTON CLASSIFICATION (7 CFR 28.910) IT IS CERTIFIED THAT
THE DATA SHOWN ABOVE CORRESPONDS TO THE OFFICIAL U. S. D. A. CLASSIFICATION OF THE SAMPLES.
COLOR GRADE AND HVI COLOR DATA ARE VALID FOR ONLY ONE YEAR FROM THE DATE OF CLASSIFICATION.                                **Signature of**
DATE ISSUED - 12/15/2004 CHIEF, COTTON PROGRAM IT STAFF
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Establishing a National Database User Account

To establish an account on the NDB, customers must complete the “National Database Application” form and send the completed form to the Cotton Program’s IT Staff by fax, mail or email. If the Windows version of the software is requested, the \$40.00 license fee must be included with the application. Customers may also complete the “National Database Credit Card Information” form if they want to pay for software and/or usage fees by credit card.

Upon receipt of the completed application, an ID number and password will be assigned to the account. Installation Instructions, file formats, NDB User Manual and software (Windows only) will be sent after the account is established. If the Internet version is selected, a website address will be supplied for the download of the software.

All active accounts are billed monthly. If any data is downloaded during the month, the account is subject to a \$5.00 minimum charge.

Contact Information:

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**United States Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Marketing Service
Cotton Program**