



## What are the Rules of the Road for Farm Vehicles?

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*Foster Swift Agricultural Law News*

July 7, 2018

### **Vehicle Identification:**

Tractors, trucks and other vehicles used by the farmers working their fields must, like all vehicles traveling on public roads, be registered and have some form of identification. For certain farm vehicles that means, in addition to a license plate, the company name and United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) number must be displayed on the power unit of the truck.

Implements of husbandry, such as tractors, wagons, trailers, trailers adapted for lifting and carrying another implement of husbandry or similar equipment used to transport farm products, are exempt from USDOT number requirements. Some vehicles can be both motor vehicles and implements of husbandry—a dump truck, for example, can be fitted with a spreader making it an implement of husbandry.

Essentially how the vehicle is categorized depends on how it is being used. Implements of husbandry must display a Slow Moving Vehicle (SMV) sign, retro-reflective tape and at least one white light on the front and one red light at the rear.

### ***When is Identification Marking Needed?***

#### **Interstate commerce:**

Trucks that meet the federal definition of a commercial vehicle and are driven outside of Michigan in interstate commerce must display the company's name and a USDOT number on both sides of the truck cab in a color that contrasts with the truck and in letters big enough to be seen at a distance of 50 feet.

#### **Intrastate or in-state commerce:**

The following motor vehicles when traveling within the state must display USDOT identifying information:

- Those with a Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR) over 26,001 pounds, inclusive a towed unit with a GVWR over 10,000 pounds

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#### **PRACTICE AREAS**

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- Any vehicle with a GVWR 26,001 pounds or more
- Any vehicle being used to transport hazardous materials, or
- A vehicle designed to transport 16 or more passengers, including the driver.

The following motor vehicles can display the company name, city and state or the USDOT information in letters at least 3" high and in a contrasting color:

- A vehicle with an actual or GVWR of more than 5,000 pounds but less than 10,000 pounds without a farm license, or
- A vehicle with a GVWR between 10,000-26,001 pounds

### **Registration and Licensing Requirements:**

Farm plates can be used only in connection with the farm or for transportation of the farmer and the family members. This includes transportation for personal use. The farmer can loan the farm-plated vehicle to others and receive payment in kind or in services, but not money. The fees for farm plates are determined by the weight of the vehicle and can be purchased for 6 or 12 months.

**Special farm plates** are used for transporting farm crops or livestock bedding between the field and the barn or silo or from the barn to the field for feeding or transport crops from the field and the grain elevator. The fee for the plate is 20 dollars and proof of insurance is needed.

**Log plates** used in logging operations and **milk plates** used exclusively to haul milk from the farm to the first point of delivery are available.

If you are not using a farm plate, you must have an **Elected Gross Vehicle Weight (EGVW) plate** for trucks with an empty weight of more than 8,000 pounds, a truck under 8,000 pounds towing a non-recreational trailer of any size; trucks of any size pulling a trailer of any size, and road or truck tractors.

For applications and fee charts, please contact the Secretary of State.

### **Dyed Diesel Fuel**

It is illegal to drive a motor vehicle on a public highway with dyed diesel fuel. Implements of husbandry are exempt from this prohibition, however, if the implement of husbandry is also a licensed vehicle, it, too, is restricted from using dyed diesel fuel on the highways.

### **Tarpping or Hay and Straw Bale Securement**

When moving crops around the farm on public roads, farmers have to consider special traffic regulations regarding tarping, spilling, or hay and straw bale securement. In general, the farmer driving a vehicle to transport agricultural goods including sand, gravel and dirt in the normal operation of the farm is not required to cover the load. However, there is a spillage law that includes fines for losing a load on the highway.



The law recognizes that some spillage can happen and if the amount spilled does not interfere with other traffic on the highway, it is not considered a violation of the law. It is important to remember that farm vehicles that fall under the definition of a commercial motor vehicle must comply with the securement regulations of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations. (FMCSR) The regulations are commodity-specific and there are working load limits for tie-downs.

These can be found in the FMCSR at Part 393, sections 100-136.

The FMCSR has rules for securing square bales of hay or straw. The bales must be loaded in a pattern that interlocks adjacent square bales together and they must be tied down. The number of tie-downs depends on the size of the trailer. For example, trucks or trailers longer than 32 feet need two lateral tie-downs and there are load limit requirements.

If you have questions about current regulations concerning farm vehicles on public and rural roads, contact Dirk Beckwith at 248.539.9918 or at [dbeckwith@fosterswift.com](mailto:dbeckwith@fosterswift.com).

***This information has been updated from an original article that was published on October 7, 2013 in Foster Swift Agricultural Law Update.***