What is the National Database?

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Cotton Program maintains a National Database in Memphis, Tennessee for owner access to cotton classification data.

The National Database 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 National Database stores classing information from all AMS cotton classing facilities.

What can be retrieved from the National Database?

The official cotton quality measurements which were originally provided to producers can be retrieved by qualified callers. Measurements available 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

Who can access the National Database?

The current owner of the cotton or an authorized agent of the owner can retrieve classification data from the National Database. Grower marketing cooperatives, buyers, and textile manufacturers are customary users of the system.

What is the cost of this service?

The cost of this service is $0.05 per bale. Users are billed monthly and must pay by check drawn on a U.S. bank or by major credit card. All long-distance telephone charges and/or Internet fees are paid by the user.

What other services are available through the National Database?

Customers may also obtain a certified classification document (Form R) from the National Database in addition to telecommunications. 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).

How secure is the classification data?

For security purposes, users are assigned identification codes and passwords which must be used to access the National Database. As part of the log-on procedure, they must also certify that they are the owner or authorized agent of the owner for all bales on which classification data is requested. The gin code and the gin bale number (Permanent Bale Identifier) are also required to access the data.

How does the National Database system work?

The National Database is a batch processing system. Before connecting to the system, customers must create a request file (c:\natdb) on their computer containing user logon information and ranges of PBI numbers they are requesting. The request file is uploaded and processed automatically upon a successful connection. A data file (c:\ams01) 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.

What kind of equipment is needed to retrieve data from 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.

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

The National Database

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