

Pack Scales

Information on types and use of pack scales

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Trekkers on the BNT who pack their gear on pack horse or pack donkey will understand the importance of loading their pack bags so that they are of equal weight and are not of excessive weight for the size and condition of the pack animal.

If pack bags are of uneven weight, the heavier pack bag will drag the packsaddle down on that side which can cause the saddle to rotate on the animal and cause injury. If packs are of excessive weight, the animal will be fatigued, may be injured or could stumble or slip. Both these problems can be easily avoided by weighing your pack bags with a small weighing scale prior to placing them on the packsaddle.

Types Of Pack Scales

Trekkers generally use one of two types of scales. The first and more common type is generally available in hardware or rural supply stores and consists of a spring, hook, and faceplate with weight graduations and indicator pointer. The pack bag is attached to the hook, the scale lifted, and the indicator position noted against the calibration marks on the faceplate. The disadvantage of this type is that you have to lift the load and read the scale at the same time. This disadvantage is overcome by the use of a specialised pack scale, which is built like the previous type but has an additional indicator that stops at the highest weight and stays there when the weight is removed. With this type of scale, the pack bag can be lifted using the scale, placed back on the ground then the weight read of the scale. This makes weighing a one-person operation and much easier to perform. The indicator is then moved back to the zero position ready for the next time. Please see the photo showing the specialised packing scale. I imported mine from Canada.

I have recently found an alternative source of pack scales. Whilst browsing in a fishing supermarket I noticed fish scales (the weighing type not the type the fish comes with!!) almost identical to the packing scale pictured. They were "Shimano" brand, very well made from aluminium and stainless steel and came in three sizes. Only certain models in the range had the additional indicator that stops at the maximum weight.



Tip

Linda Meerman told me this clever tip. If you have the first (simple) type of scale, you will quickly find that they can be difficult to use as you have to both lift the load and read the scale graduations at the same time. This problem can be overcome by getting a companion to read the graduations or you can lift the load, feel for the indicator with your other hand and place your fingernail against it then grip the scale with the other fingers of the same hand. When the packs are lowered, the weight can be read from the fingernail position on the scale.

Tip - Static and Dynamic Balance of Loads.

Please be aware that trekkers must consider the centre of gravity when packing loads as well as ensuring their static weights are balanced. Even if the pack bags are of even weight (as indicated by the scales), the bag having its centre of gravity further away from the animal will drag that side down given the greater leverage it exerts as the animal moves. Pack your bags with this in mind and keep heavier items in the bottom of the bags and close to the animal.