



Stubble Burning

Protection of scattered trees and remnant vegetation

INTRODUCTION

Under the *Native Vegetation Act, 1991*, the clearance of any native vegetation, including scattered trees, requires the consent of the Native Vegetation Council. Burning of native vegetation is one of several definitions of clearance contained within the vegetation clearance legislation.

In many parts of the agricultural districts of South Australia scattered mature trees are a very important part of the visual character of a district. Furthermore, they are often the only remaining examples of vegetation communities that were present in a district prior to extensive clearance.

Landowners increasingly understand the importance and value of scattered trees and blocks of remnant vegetation. They play an important role in the protection and management of these areas. Reasons for protection vary from providing increased habitat value by encouraging the regeneration of understorey plants, to projects aimed at reducing salinity and ground water recharge.

The use of fire to reduce stubble levels prior to sowing has been adopted by many landowners for a number of reasons, including reduced stock numbers, a change to minimum tillage operations, increasing resistance of some plants (eg Rye Grass) to herbicides, or to control snails and mice.

This information sheet has been produced in consultation with the Country Fire Service (CFS), the South Australian Farmers Federation, and the Local Government Association. The following recommendations build upon existing procedures outlined in CFS policy documents.

Adoption of these procedures, while assisting landowners in the compliance with the clearance legislation, does not remove the need for landowners to comply with other legislative requirements or directions from local authorities.

RECOMMENDED PROCEDURES

At any time of the year landowners intending to burn stubble are required to comply with the requirements of the CFS Act, including the requirement to act with due care. During the proclaimed Fire Danger Season (approx November–April) landowners intending to burn stubble must obtain a permit from their local Council.

In addition to complying with any conditions attached to such a permit, or in the event of landowners burning outside of the proclaimed Fire Danger Season, the following measures are strongly recommended.

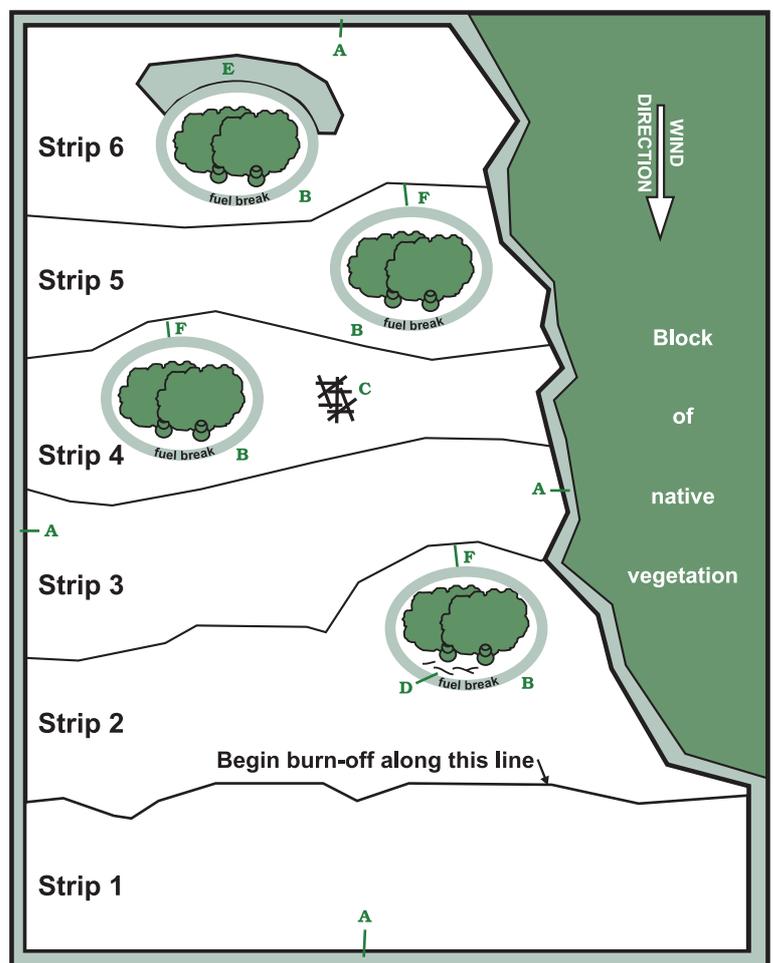
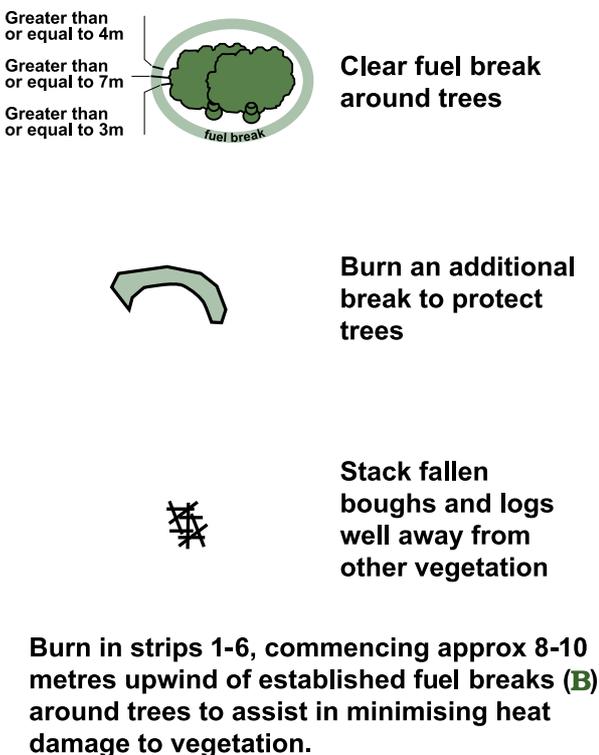
- Prepare fuel breaks at least four metres wide around the area to be burnt. All fuel breaks should be established on previously cropped land that is already clear of native vegetation **(see A in diagram)**.
- Where scattered trees occur in paddocks, similar width fuel breaks should be prepared around those trees. Fuel breaks should be located from at least 3 to a minimum of 7 metres out from the canopy edge or drip line of the trees **(see B in diagram)**.
- Any “tidying up” prior to a cropping program should not include the stacking of fallen logs and boughs against trees. Any burning of these logs and boughs must be undertaken in an area well away from standing trees and other native vegetation **(see C in diagram)**. As an alternative in



recognition of the increased habitat value created by the presence of fallen logs, landowners may consider the retention of some of the fallen limbs within the unburnt area around trees **(see D in diagram)**.

- The impact of heat scorch to remnant vegetation or scattered trees should be minimised. Protection against this type of damage may take the form of small protection burns undertaken adjacent to any existing fuel breaks established around trees or remnant vegetation **(see E in diagram)**. Any small protection burns should be located to extend a further 8-10 metres out from fuel breaks previously established around trees on the upwind side.
- Any burning operation adjoining blocks of native vegetation should only be undertaken in conditions where the landowner is confident of maintaining control of the fire and preventing it escaping into the vegetation.
- By using strip burning **(see strips 1-6 in diagram)**, it is possible to control the direction and rate of burning to match the wind, fuel and team strength.
- Correct placement of the “edge” of any new strip burns can add to the protection of existing trees. Where possible the leading edge of any new strip burn should begin 8-10 metres out from those fuel breaks around scattered trees to allow for a slow burn up to and incorporating that break **(see F in diagram)**.
- Do not attempt to burn an area larger than can be controlled with the persons and equipment available under the weather conditions at the time.
- Ensure that adequate facilities for extinguishing fires and ample water is immediately available from tanks and portable pumps set up on trucks or utes for farm fire fighting.
- Have a definite method of operation. Carefully plan burning activities to take into account as many factors as possible and to ensure that the coolest fire is achieved. The ‘*light it up and let it go*’ plan is an invitation to disaster.

Note: In some Council areas the burning of fallen logs as part of a general stubble burning operation may not be permitted. This may need to be undertaken separately.



FURTHER INFORMATION
 Native Vegetation Council
 Telephone: 8124 4700
 Fax: 8124 4745
 Email: nvc@saugov.sa.gov.au