

Stubble Burning

Protecting Scattered Trees and Remnant Vegetation

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Background

In many parts of the South Australian agricultural districts scattered mature trees are a very important part of the visual character of a district, and often the only remaining examples of vegetation communities present prior to extensive clearance. Increasingly, landholders understand the importance and value of scattered trees and blocks of remnant vegetation, and play an important role in the protection and management. The reasons may vary from providing habitat value by encouraging the regeneration of understorey plants, to projects aimed at reducing salinity and ground water recharge.

Under the Native Vegetation Act 1991 the clearance of any native vegetation, including scattered trees, requires the consent of the Native Vegetation Council (NVC). There are several definitions of 'clearance', one of which is burning of native vegetation. Many landholders have adopted the use of fire to reduce stubble levels prior to sowing for a number of reasons, including reduced stock numbers, a change to minimum tillage operations, increasing resistance of some plants such as Rye Grass to herbicides, or to control snails and mice.

This fact sheet outlines some recommended procedures for stubble burning, which have been developed in consultation with the South Australian Country Fire Service (SA CFS), the Primary Producers South Australia (PPSA) and the Local Government Association (LGA). Adoption of these procedures, while assisting landholders in the compliance with the native vegetation legislation, does not remove the need for landholders to comply with other legislative requirements or directions from local authorities.

What are the Recommended Procedures for undertaking stubble burning?

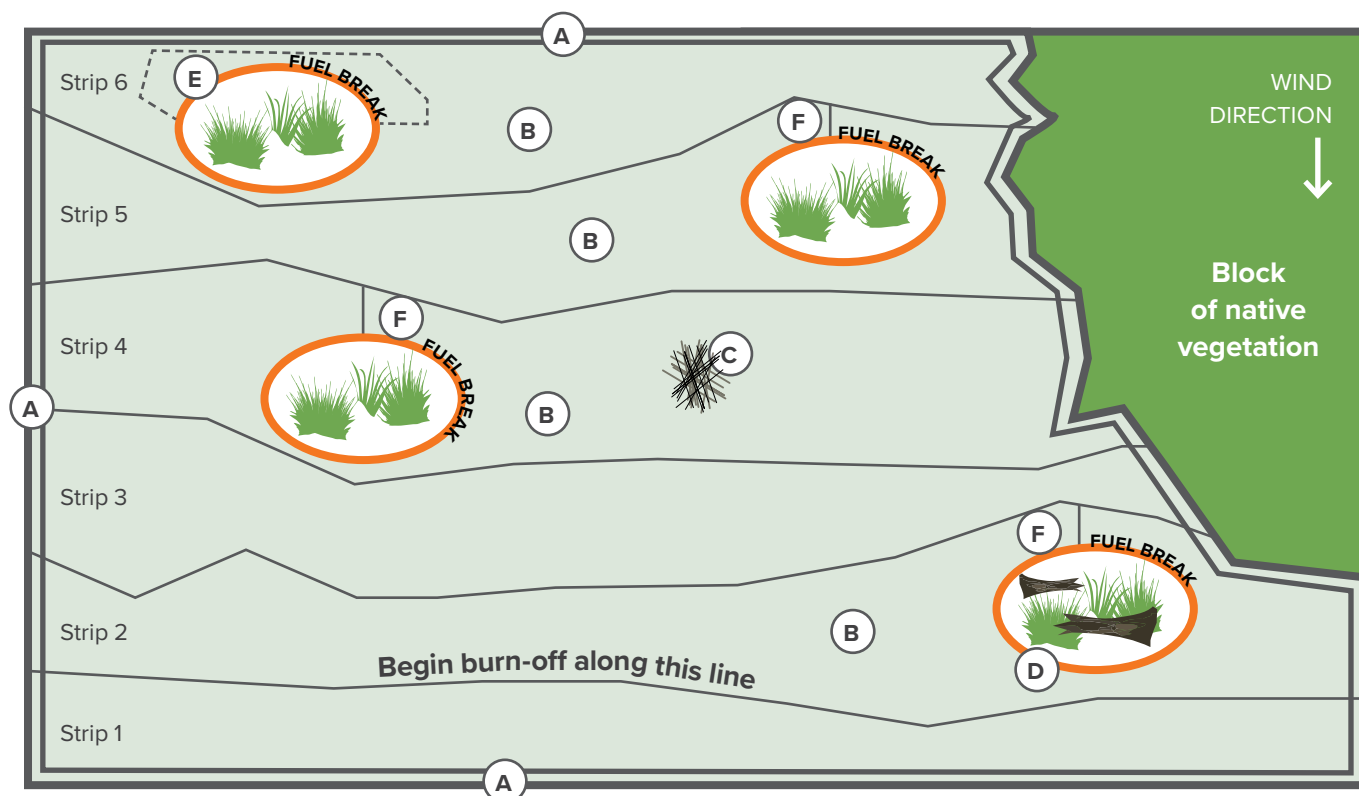
Landholders intending to burn stubble are required to comply with the requirements of the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005*. During the proclaimed Fire Danger Season (approximately October–April but subject to seasonal and district change), landholders intending to burn stubble must obtain a permit from their Local Council.

In addition to complying with any conditions attached to such a permit, or in the event of landholders burning outside of the proclaimed fire danger season, the following measures are strongly recommended:

- Prepare fuel breaks at least 4m around the area to be burnt, and on previously cropped land 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 3m to a minimum of 7m out from the canopy edge or drop 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. Burning of these logs and boughs should be undertaken in an area well away from standing trees and other native vegetation (**see C in diagram**). In recognition of the increased habitat value created by the presence of fallen logs, landholders may consider the retention of some of the fallen limbs within the unburnt area around trees (**see D in diagram**).
- Heat scorch to remnant vegetation or scattered trees should be minimised, and protection may take the form of small 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 where the landholder 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. The leading edge of any new strip burn should begin 8-10m out from those fuel breaks around scattered trees to allow for a slow burn up to and incorporating that break (**see F in diagram**).

Where native vegetation is proposed to be burned for improved ecological management, an application must be submitted to the NVC under Regulation 11(25) for [Ecological Prescribed Burning](#). If a landholder wants to burn native vegetation for [fuel reduction purposes](#), an application must be submitted to the CFS.

Burn in strips 1-6, commencing approx 8-10m upwind of establishing fuel breaks (B) around trees to assist in minimising heat damage to vegetation.



Clear fuel break around



Burn an additional break to protect trees



Stack fallen boughs and logs well away from other vegetation

For more information

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