

CULL FELLING

By P. N. Shedley

The term cull felling is used to cover the silvicultural removal of useless and potentially marketable trees which are competing with valuable growing stock. The term also covers the preparation of saleable mill logs from these trees.

In the Karri forest areas, a system of cull felling has been introduced to all the major Karri sawmilling permits. Briefly the system is to classify the tree to be removed into one of three groups by placing one, two or three toe-marks on it.

One mark trees are the major group about which there is little or no doubt regarding quality. The cost of the small proportion of condemned logs which result from this source is carried by the industry.

Two mark trees must be felled and tested by the industry, but are trees of doubtful quality. The Department pays compensation for the cost of falling and testing where no mill log is obtained.

Three mark trees are useless to the industry and the Department again compensates for the cost of falling. Falling is compulsory, but testing is not required.

Record books which show measurements of all two and three mark trees are kept by the fallers who are paid by the Department.

The method is proving a very useful silvicultural operation at a very moderate cost.

Could Barney White give us some per acre figures with an estimate of the cost of a comparable job carried out without the assistance of the sawmiller?

Some concern is felt within the industry at the increase in the proportion of average quality logs at the expense of the much sought after "mineguide" logs. This is likely to effect marginal and fire damaged permits in particular because the proportion of two and three mark trees is higher in these areas.

The system although being a useful one, is unwieldy in its operation, having a complicated marking procedure and an involvement of three parties in the continual struggle for acceptable utilisation standards.

I suggest that if the Department payed compensation to the permit holder, not the faller, for all trees which do not produce acceptable mill logs, the cost would be no more in the high quality undamaged stands, it would provide an equitable share of the cost of silviculturally treating poorer quality forest, would leave the forester once again to deal with the permit holder only in matters of log treatment and acceptability and simplify the tree marking and

administration of the cull felling operation.

Naturally in the poorer stands there will be some increase in cost, but only represented by the number of one mark trees which turn out to be unacceptable. Payments made to the permit holder will then provide some compensation for an overall drop in quality and the use of equipment while the question of paying the faller for increased work remains the responsibility of the permit holder.

Cull felling in the Jarrah is most desirable silviculturally and in many areas the thinning of regrowth stands is hampered by the presence of the culls. Economically it is sound to remove culls at the time of the trade operations when log extraction equipment is at hand, but when we come to consider cull felling in the Jarrah forest, the very thought of recording the vast number of unacceptable logs which would be produced in the average permit today, makes us shun even the simplest system of compensating a permit holder or faller to perform all that is required. On the other hand the industry is at present accepting a far greater rejection rate in Jarrah than was the case in Karri before cull felling so that we have more to lose if we accept the responsibility of compensation for unacceptable logs.

The alternatives appear to be an entirely separate operation following trade cutting or for the Department to carry out all falling operations.

In the first instance there is the difficult problem, particularly in the south, of recovering logs resulting from the operation.

Alternatively, should the Department undertake to carry out the whole operation, the situation might be as follows.

Consider the theoretical case of a permit of 9,600 loads obtained from 2,400 acres per annum.

It is considered that two fallers could -

- (a) Fall the 40 loads per day required by the mill;
- (b) Carry out the cull felling required;
- (c) Carry out all top disposal cleaning;

and this is estimated to cost for a year -

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| Wages 2 @ £1,300 | £2,600 |
| Overheads | £520 |
| Operating costs for 2 chain saws @ £500 | £1,000 |
| Transport and sundries | £500 |
| | <hr/> |
| | £4,620 |
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We could expect a direct return from the permit holder of 5/- plus 1/- overheads per load.

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| Per Annum | £2,880 |
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| leaving the cost of cull felling and top disposal at | £1,740 |
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| Cost per acre for 2,400 acres | 14/6d. |
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We are already spending 5/- per acre on top disposal cleaning.

I can't suggest a better value than cull felling in the Jarrah for 9/6d. per acre.

Perhaps we can't persuade existing sawmillers to come to the party, but what about new permit areas and why not at Dwellingup?

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