

THE CHANGING SIGNIFICANCE OF ADVANCE AND TOP DISPOSAL
BURNS IN JARRAH FOREST

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In the days of complete protection the necessity of advance burns could not have been questioned, since the accumulated hazard and the risk of ignition were too great to tolerate.

When the forest has reached a 4 year burning cycle, the great bulk of burning is done in the spring, as the litter reaches age 4. Thus in the following summer the only litter which is 4 years old is that very small proportion awaiting an autumn burn.

Under ideal conditions (hazard Moderate or Average) for spring burning, age 4 is the youngest at which the forest floor can be burned. Possibly the figure is 5 years in the forest west of the scarp South of Busselton.

As a very junior officer I was instructed to stop all burning when the hazard reached 'High'. Experience has proved the wisdom of this and certainly there are extensive areas which should not be lit on a 'High' hazard day, nor on a night following such a day.

In the Kirup Division for some years an advance burn has not been used as a regular practice unless there are special circumstances to make it desirable.

Where a 4 year controlled burning cycle is established, and without an advance burn, the result is that a top disposal burn 1 year after cutting will be in the litter from 1-4 years old. Under mild spring burning conditions the fire will as a general rule not run in 1 or 2 year old, may run in parts of the 3 year old and will run in the 4 year old then.

We therefore have two alternatives for timing of the top disposal burn:

1. Do it 1 year after cutting irrespective of the fuel age.
- or 2. Wait until we can use a running fire.

Which of these would you choose?
