

# BUYING AND STORING FIREWOOD



THE FIREWOOD ASSOCIATION  
OF AUSTRALIA INC.

## Buying firewood

Wood is sold in two main ways, by **weight** (tonnes or kilograms) or by **volume** (cubic metres). It is an offence under the National Measurement Act to sell less than the stated quantity.

## Sale by weight

When wood is weighed for sale a certified scale or weighbridge must be used. If you don't actually see the wood being weighed, you must receive a written statement of the weight. Because all dry firewood contains approximately the same amount of energy (19-21 MJ/kg), buying by weight is a good way of ensuring that you get the same amount of heat from every load, regardless of species or wood density. The downside is that you are also paying for any water that may be contained in the wood. Unless you buy properly seasoned wood it is possible that you will be paying for a lot of water that has to be boiled out of the wood before it will burn properly, a process that will cool your fire and cause it to smoke. Buying by weight is the safest method as you know what you are getting, but you need to make sure that the wood is dry.

## Sale by volume

If you buy your firewood by the cubic metre (volume), the higher the density of the wood the better value you will get. For example, a cubic metre of Ironbark will weigh approximately twice as much as the same volume of Pine, and therefore will provide twice as much heat. Generally, wood sold by the metre is thrown or tipped into crates or bins. The volume of wood that is thrown or tipped into a bin or cage will often be considerably less than the volume of the bin or cage itself. To confirm that the stated volume of firewood in a crate or bin is correct, it must be neatly re-stacked with as few gaps as practicable.

If you are doubtful about the volume of a load you can stack the wood yourself, or ask the merchant to stack it for you. You can then calculate the volume by multiplying the stack's height  $\times$  width  $\times$  length.

One advantage of buying by the cubic metre is that you aren't paying for any excess water that may be contained in the wood. However, if the wood is not properly seasoned (below 25% moisture content) it won't burn well and will cause your heater to smoke.

Firewood is sometimes sold by '**the lot**', where a set price is quoted for a ute load, boot load, trailer load, bin, or crate. Merchants who sell wood in this way must not state a weight or volume for the sale lot. If they do they will have to comply with the regulations for weight or volume measurement. The advantages and disadvantages of buying wood in this way are the same as buying by volume, however, the main difference is that you can't compare the quantity and value with other sellers. What you see is what you get!

Bagged or packaged firewood must be sold by weight. The weight of each bag or pack must be clearly displayed, along with the name and address of the company that did the packing. Packaged wood needs to be well seasoned before packing. If it isn't, the moisture that is lost from the wood through evaporation could mean that the package will end up being underweight.

## Storing firewood

If possible store wood in a well ventilated, covered location, such as an open sided shed. It is best to store wood off the ground, on a pallet, bricks or plastic to prevent moisture from being drawn up into the wood. This will keep the wood clean and also reduce the number of insects and spiders. Firewood should never be stacked against a house as it may provide a bridge for termites. In bushfire prone areas wood should be stacked well away from the house. If the top of the stack has become wet from recent rain, wood should be taken from lower in the stack. Wood wet by rain will dry again within a few days.

Look for the distinctive FAA membership logo which is displayed by FAA members or call **1300 131 481** for your nearest member.

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