



# Grass Fires

**GRASS FIRES SPREAD QUICKLY AND CAN THREATEN LIVES, PROPERTY, CROPS AND STOCK**

## PROTECT YOURSELF

Grass fires can start quickly and spread rapidly, catching people off-guard. Grass fires are very hot and can produce huge amounts of heat that can kill anyone caught out in the open.

The safest place to be during a grass fire is well away from the fire. When in the vicinity of a grass fire, always keep the burnt ground in mind as a safe refuge. If you are threatened by a grass fire, always protect yourself by covering up all exposed skin with protective clothing such as:

- Long-sleeved shirt and pants made from a natural fibre such as cotton.
- Sturdy leather boots and woollen socks.
- Leather gloves.
- A wide-brimmed hat.
- A face mask or towel to cover your mouth and nose.
- Eye protection such as goggles.

Make sure you drink plenty of water to keep hydrated and be aware of your level of physical fitness, heat exhaustion, heat stroke and sunburn.



*Protect your property, livestock and crops*

### The Importance of Fire Breaks:

- The spring time preparation of fire breaks by mowing, grazing, brush cutting or ploughing around buildings, crops, pasture, storage areas, along key fence lines and other exposures will greatly assist in fighting fires during the summer.
- Construct effective fire breaks as a means of preventing fire escapes from your property and reducing the likelihood of fires entering.
- Fire breaks should, where practical, be designed to avoid trees or to provide an additional break around the trees themselves.
- Work together with neighbours to construct effective fire breaks.

REPORT ALL FIRES TO:  
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## IDEALLY YOU SHOULD MAINTAIN SHORT GREEN GRASS AROUND YOUR HOUSE AND BUILDINGS.

### 0% CURED (green)



### 40% CURED



### 90% CURED



## WHAT IS CURING?

- When grasses are dying and drying out they are curing. The browner the grass the more cured it is.
- The more 'cured' grasses are, the more intensely they burn and the quicker the fire will spread.
- Grass on dry ridges cures more rapidly than in moist low-lying areas or creek lines.
- Grasses respond quickly to changes in air moisture - they absorb moisture from damp air overnight and lose moisture very quickly on high fire danger days. This means that grasses can be ready to burn early in the day.

## WIND

Wind is an important factor in grass fires. Wind determines how quickly a fire moves through grass and which direction it travels in. Grass fires are quick to respond to changes in wind speed and direction.

## GRASS HEIGHT

Fire in tall grass will have tall flames that may burn across trails, roads or fire breaks.

## GRASSLAND CURING GUIDE

Cured %	Colour	Physiological changes
0	Green	From germination to start of seed head development
20-30	Greenish-yellow	Seed head maturing and opening from top
40	Yellow-green	
60	Straw. Odd patch of green or yellow-green	Seed dropped, half to one third of most stems green. Some paddocks fully cured, others green
80	Straw. Very little green showing anywhere	Some greenness in lower third of stalks. Many stalks fully cured
90	Straw. Odd green gully	Odd stalks may show some greenness
100	Bleached	All stalks fully cured, seed heads and stalks starting to break easily

## MACHINERY AND GRASS FIRES

Machinery such as tractors, slashers, harvesters, welders, chainsaws and grinders can start grass fires. During the bush fire danger period, it is important that any machinery such as listed above are:

- Free from any faults and mechanical defects that could start a fire.
- Fitted with an approved spark arrestor.
- Carrying a working water fire extinguisher or knapsack.
- Not used during extreme fire conditions.

- Slashers should not be used unless conditions are mild and/or they are accompanied by an independent means of fire suppression.
- Grinders should not be used unless conditions are mild and/or the immediate area is dampened down to prevent ignition.

Prior to any machinery maintenance works, clear the immediate area of flammable materials.

**Note:** During Total Fire Ban days, no hot work (welding, grinding) in the open is permitted without special permission from the Rural Fire Service.