

Fire Protection On CRP Land

WHAT ARE FIREBREAKS AND FIREGUARDS?

Firebreaks are strips of bare land or vegetation that retard fire. Fireguards are a combination of firebreaks and the needed blacklines.

HOW IT HELPS THE LAND

The Conservation Reserve Program has put permanent vegetative cover on over a million acres of highly erodible cropland in Oklahoma. This cover will save thousands of tons of soil from erosion. However, while erosion protection and wildlife benefits have increased, so has the need for rural wildfire protection. A house or farm structure that once was located within the boundaries of cropland, now sits amid an ungrazed grass cover and may be vulnerable to wildfires.

Fire can start unexpectedly from accidents. Trash fires, welders, lightning, and arson are some examples.

WHERE THE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice can be used anywhere protection from wildfire is needed.

WHERE TO GET HELP

For assistance on planning firebreaks or the associated prescribed burning, contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service or Conservation District Office.

REQUIREMENTS FOR A FIREBREAK

A firebreak is a bladed or a plowed strip with at least 10 feet of bare mineral soil. The key is to replace a

strip of vegetative cover that will burn when dormant with something that will not burn. The firebreak can be planted each year to an annual green winter crop and fallowed in the summer, or combined with a green summer crop. Not only will these strips offer year-round wildfire protection, but could enhance the habitat for many kinds of wildlife.

REQUIREMENTS FOR A FIREGUARD

Fireguards should be no less than 100 feet in width. Generally, 500 feet will be of sufficient maximum width.

APPLYING THE PRACTICE

Illustrated on the following page are different combinations of firebreaks that can be used to protect houses or other farm structures. When double firebreaks are used, they should be 100 - 500 feet apart around the area to be protected. To complete the fireguard, the grass in between the firebreaks can be burned safely under prescribed conditions to give added protection. When burning, always follow a prescribed burning plan.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

When possible, locate firebreaks on the contour to avoid soil erosion.

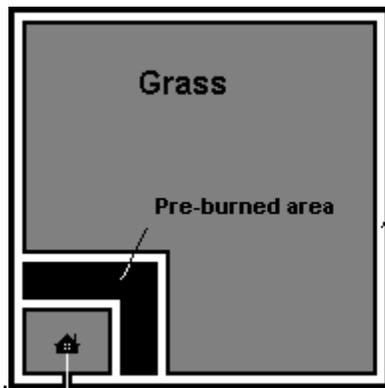
MAINTAINING THE PRACTICE

The firebreaks need to be reworked at least annually, just prior to the fire danger season. During an extended summer drought, the firebreak may need to be worked if dry or dead vegetation has formed.



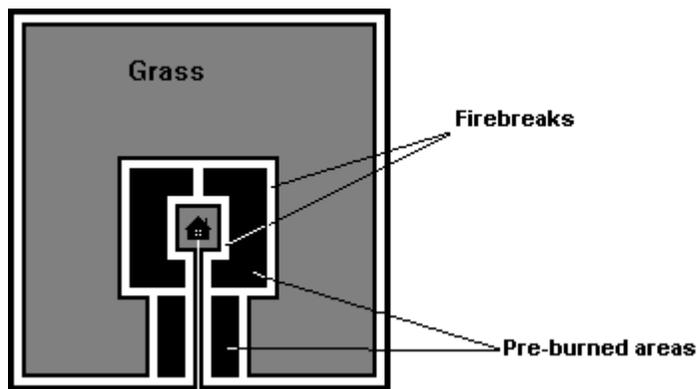
THESE DRAWINGS ILLUSTRATE SOME POSSIBLE FIREBREAK/FIREGUARD STRATEGIES.

1. A clean, double firebreak around the perimeter of a field and house with a blackened area to complete the fireguard.



A firebreak either bladed or plowed to remove litter. If planted to an annual green crop, fire protection and wildlife benefits are possible.

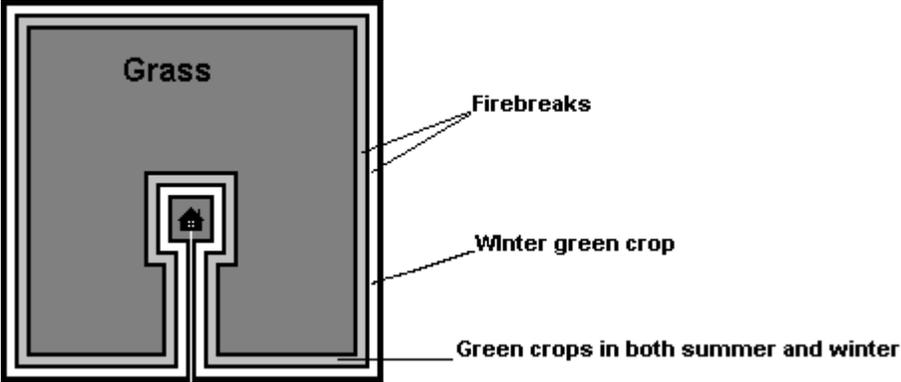
2. A clean double firebreak around the field and perimeter of a house, with a burned interior for the fireguard.



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3. A firebreak around the field, with alternating green crops in both winter and summer for year-around protection.



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