AG ENGINEERING EDGE

Answers to questions about structures, ventilation, soil, water, waste, energy, machinery and safety.

Calculating cordwood correctly

Every fall I get callers wanting to know what the going rate for firewood is. They tell me they can buy a "rick" of wood for $30-$65 and want to be sure they are getting all the firewood they're paying for. A few more questions and we determine that the rick of wood they are thinking of buying ranges anywhere in size from one-third to two-thirds of a cord. With a cord of wood selling for $70-$120 per 128 cubic feet (the volume of a 4'x 4'x 8' stack), I advise them to measure the wood after it is stacked, rather than guessing the amount while on a truck or in the woodlot.

Try this simple formula for computing accurate cordwood volumes. Measure in inches the length, width and average height of the compactly-stacked pile of wood. Multiply these three figures together and divide the result by 221,000. The answer is the number of cords. Multiply this number by the dollar cost per cord to get the price the buyer should pay. Remember, selling wood by the cord, with an accompanying bill of sale, is the only legal way, according to Missouri state law, that firewood can be sold.

By the way, those little bundles of pine wood you can buy for about $3.99 from the local convenience store are about 7/1000th of a cord. So the "per cord" price comes to about $570 — a high price indeed for the ambiance of a roaring fire on a cold winter night.

For further reading, see these MU Extension publications:

- MU Extension publication G5450, Wood Fuel for Heating
- MU Extension publication G5452, How to Buy and Sell Cordwood