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What you need to know before you harvest the woodlot on your farm

Many farms have small stands of trees (woodlots) that were planted 25 to 40 years ago for diversification.

KEY POINTS

- Engage an experienced contractor to do the harvesting work.
- Work with the contractor to make sure workers and other people are not put at risk by the harvesting activities.
- Check that the contractor has a safety management plan.
- Make sure access roads and tracks to the woodlot are strong enough to support forestry vehicles.

Trees were often planted on difficult and unproductive land, or to stabilise areas prone to slips. They may also have been planted to provide shelter and have been untended and exposed to significant wind and weather.

Harvesting trees is dangerous. Some woodlots are left until it is profitable to harvest them.

This means the trees are more mature and workers need additional skills and experience to safely harvest them.

Due to the risks involved work must be undertaken by competent workers. Unless you and your workers have experience and formal training in forestry operations it is best to hire a competent and experienced contractor.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

A safe and productive harvest requires good planning and communication.

Engage a reputable forestry contractor

Contractors should have trained and qualified workers, and the plant and equipment to carry out the work safely. Make sure they have an effective safety management system.

Ask how they manage harvesting safety and look for answers that include things like - 'all my people are trained', 'we have daily tail gate meetings'. Check out how experienced they are and what they have done in response to any notices or advice from WorkSafe, or incidents, or near-misses in the past.

worksafe.govt.nz/topic-and-industry/forestry

WORK WITH THE CONTRACTOR TO MAKE SURE EVERYONE STAYS SAFE

Talking with the contractor and your farm workers is important so that workers aren't put at risk. Everyday activities on your farm create hazards that forestry workers may not be aware of and forestry activities create hazards that farm workers need to know about.

You need to work with the contractor to make sure that all hazards and risks from both the harvesting and your farm work are identified and effective controls are in place.

The contractor will include this information in the harvest plan.¹ You will need to make sure that you explain these to your workers and others on the farm.

Other things to discuss with your contractor:

- how you and the contractor communicate new hazards
- emergency management, including fires
- accessing the work area
- incident reporting
- work done near utilities.

Talk to the contractor regularly to make sure they are following agreed plans. You can also engage someone who has a sound understanding of forest operations to check the contractor is following the harvest plan and complying with forest harvesting safety work practices. If you have any concerns, discuss them with the contractor as soon as you can.

Accessing the work area. Farm roads, culverts and bridges must be strong enough for forestry-related vehicles, such as log trucks and heavy harvesting equipment. It is a good idea to get an engineer to check this before work commences. You will also need to work with the contractor to make sure there is sufficient controlled safe space to allow the harvesting to occur, including log storage and allowing for the movement of machinery and trucks. You can mark this off on your farm hazard map.

Notify WorkSafe. Felling trees for commercial gain is notifiable work. The contractor must notify WorkSafe at least 24 hours before felling begins. For more information please visit:

worksafe.govt.nz/notifications/hazardous-work/

If you decide to harvest the woodlot yourself, or use your own employees and your equipment, you will need to refer to the *Approved Code of Practice – Safety and Health in Forest Operations* when planning and undertaking the work:

worksafe.govt.nz/topic-and-industry/forestry/safety-and-health-in-forest-operations/

Even if you engage a contractor to do the harvesting work you have health and safety duties.

For more information see the *Managing a safe and healthy small forest harvest good practice guidelines*:
worksafe.govt.nz/topic-and-industry/agriculture/tree-work-on-farms/managing-a-safe-and-healthy-small-forest-harvest/

¹ The harvest plan contains information about the forest site and how the work will be done.