



Inside Ag *October 2012*

Burn Firewood, Not Your Wallet

With the colder months just around the corner, many Colorado Consumers may turn to the use of firewood as an alternative means of reducing heating costs. Consequently, consumer purchases of firewood will increase statewide. Unfortunately, many consumers will pay a lot for firewood, without receiving the amount they think they purchased.

The Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) strongly recommends that when purchasing firewood, it is done so from a reputable dealer. Nick Brechun, Measurement Standards Program Administrator for CDA, encourages consumers when purchasing wood in bulk, that “The buyer should obtain the seller’s name and business address.” In addition, “Bulk firewood sellers in Colorado must provide a receipt with this information as well as the price, amount, and type of wood.”

When firewood is purchased from bulk, the appropriate method of sale for this commodity is by the cord or fractional cord. The amount of wood in a cord consists of a neatly stacked volume of wood that equals 128 cubic feet. For example, one cord equals a stack of wood that is 4 feet wide by 4 feet high by 8 feet long. Once a purchase is made, the buyer should stack their wood in the manner described above to get a good idea if they received the amount paid for.

Brechun cautions consumers against the purchase of firewood advertised by the terms truckload, face cord, rick, fireplace cord or pile. These terms do not allow for the facilitation of a value comparison for the purchaser. For instance, the size of one truckload may be different than the size of the seller’s competitor. Thus the consumer would have no way of knowing which would be the better buy.

Bundled firewood is commonly seen at grocery and convenience stores. The correct method of sale for bundles is the cubic foot. The actual amount of wood must meet the quantity declaration. Bundles must be properly labeled with net volume, wood type, and responsible party contact information. Department inspectors verify compliance at retail locations throughout Colorado.

The Inspection and Consumer Services Division of the CDA has 12 inspectors statewide who investigate complaints involving misrepresentation or mislabeling of firewood. Brechun states, “One way of helping to ensure that the consumer receives what they pay for is for them to be knowledgeable about the product as well as the business they are buying from.”

Contact the Measurement Standards office at (303) 477-4220 with questions or for help in disputes regarding the sale of firewood. Firewood suppliers can be found under the “Fuel & Firewood” section of the Colorado Forest Service [“Forest Products”](#) website.

In addition, the Colorado Department of Agriculture also participates with other agencies in the Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS) program which involves the early detection of exotic pests that threaten Colorado’s agriculture and environment. Such pests may be found on firewood and if transported, can result in the spread of harmful insects and the destruction of trees. Further information regarding how you can protect Colorado’s forests can be found at the CDA [Division of Plant Industry](#) website or by clicking the [“Burn It Where You Buy It!”](#) link for more details.