

Vineyard removal and waste guide



Vineyard removal

Vineyard removal is a significant undertaking that requires careful planning and execution to ensure it is carried out efficiently, cost-effectively and with minimal impact to the environment. This information pack provides a general guide to vineyard removal and waste management options in South Australia. It includes a planning checklist, key steps involved in vineyard removal and estimated costs drawn from interviews with industry practitioners, contractors, and waste management providers. In practice, each step taken to remove a vineyard will be tailored based on site-specific factors. These include vineyard area, layout, headland area and slope, as well as waste management choices.

Starting a vineyard removal project

Before starting a vineyard removal project, it is important to understand the main activities. Key tasks include removal of dripper tube, wires, posts and vines before levelling the site and then notifying Vinehealth Australia. Keep in mind each step can generate different waste streams, making waste management a critical part of the process. Depending on the material type and condition, and objectives of the practitioner, waste can be reused, recycled, stored, or disposed. During the project's preparation phase, carefully consider how each step will be carried out, establish a timeline, and develop a budget. Note that vineyard removal commonly includes a level of contractor involvement. To assist with creating a plan, a planning checklist and summary of cost considerations are provided later in this document.

Steps for removing vines and infrastructure back to levelled land

The process of clearing a vineyard and its above-ground infrastructure, returning the land to a levelled state is outlined in Table 1. Note that vines should be completely removed—including their root systems—before notifying Vinehealth Australia. Cutting vines down to stubs is not sufficient for deregistration with Vinehealth Australia, because the stub can still reshoot. Options to manage the various waste streams are discussed later in this document.

Table 1. Key steps involved in vineyard removal

Step	Actions						
1. Remove dripper tube and wires	1.1. Flush lines and review Netafim Recoil guidelines (https://www.netafim.com.au/contentassets/1c63c6f9f1fb4e598004614a29e832e8/recoil-guidelines---march-2025.pdf?v=494e00) (if recycling dripper tube) 1.2. Remove clips that attached dripper tube to wire (if recycling dripper tube) 1.3. Separate dripper tube from dripper wire and roll each separately 1.4. Bale dripper tube (optional) 1.5. Roll up other wire(s)						
2. Remove posts and vines	2.1 Cut cordon wire at strainer posts 2.2. Pull out vines (method will depend on your specific situation e.g. small vs. large headland, small vs. large vines, narrow vs. wide rows, soil type, vine age, equipment availability; refer below for two example approaches) <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border: none;">2.2.1. Cut vines just below cordon</td> <td style="width: 50%; border: none;">2.2.1. Cut cordon wire between each vine</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border: none;">2.2.2. Drag cordon and wire to the headland and pile</td> <td style="border: none;">2.2.2. Pull up/dig vines roots system</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border: none;">2.2.3. Pull up/dig out the vine and roots and pile</td> <td style="border: none;">2.2.3. Pick up and pile removed vines</td> </tr> </table> 2.3. Pull up posts out of the ground and pile (if you have narrow rows or other site-specific considerations, you may do this at step 2.2 to make movement of machinery easier)	2.2.1. Cut vines just below cordon	2.2.1. Cut cordon wire between each vine	2.2.2. Drag cordon and wire to the headland and pile	2.2.2. Pull up/dig vines roots system	2.2.3. Pull up/dig out the vine and roots and pile	2.2.3. Pick up and pile removed vines
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3. Level ground	3.1. Level the soil. This may include additional discing and scarification to remove vine roots and other debris.						
4. Manage waste	4.1. Transport wastes to offsite recycling, onsite storage or other disposal locations (as required)						
5. Notify Vinehealth Australia	5.1. After vine removal, notify Vinehealth Australia (within 3 months)						

Managing waste streams from vineyard removal

The following sections outline waste management options for different waste streams resulting from vineyard removal – that is; dripper tube, wire, vines and posts. Before removing a vineyard, consider how different waste streams will be managed. The waste hierarchy (Figure 1) presents a preferred order for managing waste, prioritising actions from most to least beneficial. Vineyard waste can be managed through four approaches: re-use, recycling, storage, and disposal.

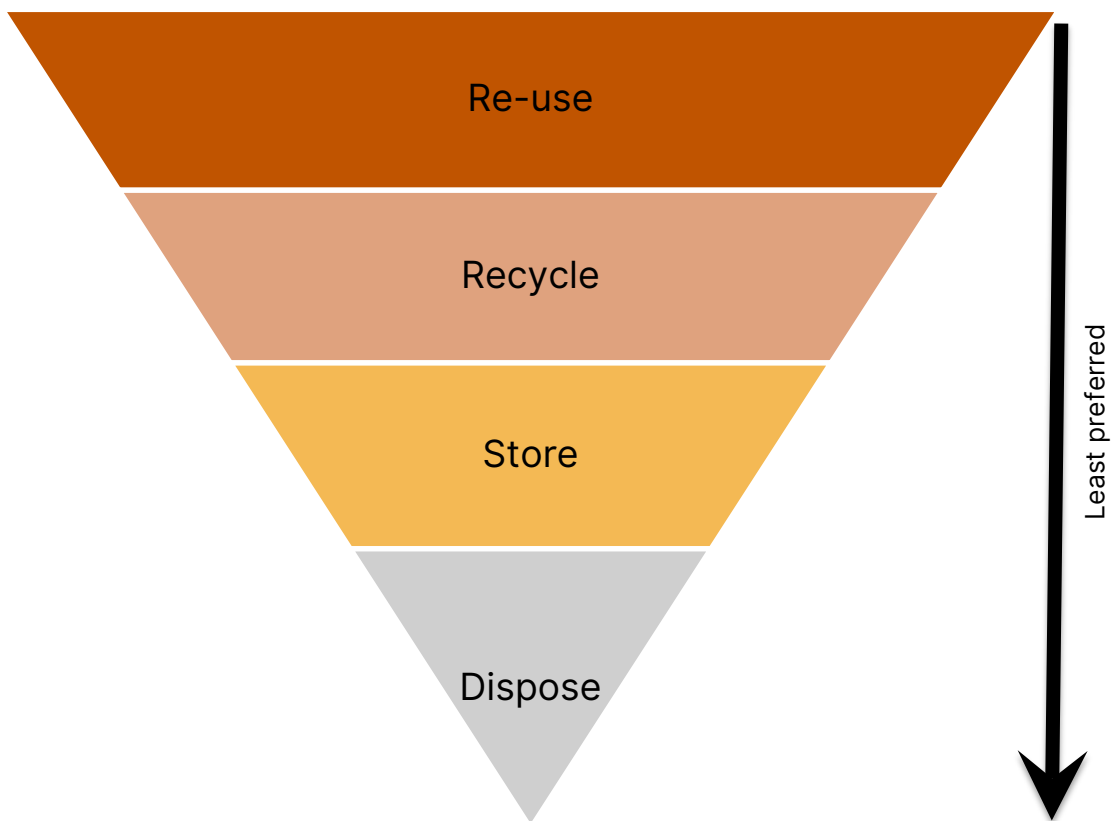


Figure 1. Waste hierarchy

Managing dripper tube and wire waste streams



Re-use, recycling, storage and disposal options are available for dripper tube and wire waste streams. Re-use options depend on the age/integrity of the dripper tube or wire. Dripper tube may be reused for redevelopment or garden projects, whereas wire may be reused for fencing. In practice, used wire and dripper tube are generally gathered at the same time. Using a winder (e.g. wire winder) for each waste type will help organise the waste for both storage and/or disposal. If you are planning on recycling the dripper tube, it must be separated from the dripper wire.

Netafim offers a fee-for-service dripper tube 'recoil and retrieval' service through their ReGen™ program, which recycles used dripper tube into new products. This service is currently the only dripper tube recycling service available in Australia. Outside of this service (and reuse alternatives), storage or disposal are the only available options.

Considering recycling dripper tube?

If you are planning to recycle dripper tube, carefully review Netafim's strict recycling criteria before beginning any work. Dripper lines must be flushed before coiling, and all steel and plastic clips must be removed. Refer to Netafim's guidelines here:

<https://www.netafim.com.au/contentassets/1c63c6f9f1fb4e598004614a29e832e8/recoil-guidelines---march-2025.pdf?v=494e00>.

To request the service, submit a request form (<https://www.netafim.com.au/recoil-form/>) with your business details, including the length, type and brand of dripper tube you are removing. If Netafim is unable to accept the dripper tube for recycling, alternative options may be provided. A common reason Netafim rejects dripper tube for recycling is if recoil guidelines are not followed

(e.g. dripper tube was wound with wire). Wire should be bundled neatly to save on space and can be recycled through scrap metal yards or sold, both options returning a positive value.

Considering onsite storage or disposal of dripper tube?

If disposing dripper tube and wire to landfill, there is no need to separate them. Both waste types can be wound on the same wire winder. If storing waste while waiting for alternative disposal options, separating waste streams at the time of collection will likely provide more future disposal options. Compressing (compacting) dripper tube bundles (with a hay baler or alternative) should be considered to reduce the volume and decrease the overall transport cost to a recycling or disposal facility.

Managing removed vines



It is common practice to burn removed vines. Wood chipping and mulching may also be a waste management option depending on access to fit-for-purpose equipment, the volume of waste to be processed, and future land use where the mulch is applied.

Burning vines

The burning process is faster if vines are in a dried-out state. Waiting until the vines are dry before burning is recommended. When burning a vine pile, the heat generated will be significant. To minimise disturbance to neighbours or other infrastructure, site the pile away from sensitive locations and choose a day when the wind direction will further reduce these potential disturbances. Ensure onsite supervision of burning piles at all times. Burning in the open is regulated in South Australia. Depending on your location, you may require council approval before burning (check with your local council on regulations). If you live outside metropolitan Adelaide and outside townships, burning to dispose of agricultural waste must comply with the relevant CFS Code of Practice (Environment Protection Authority, 2024).

Mulching vines

Mulching or chipping to dispose of grapevines may be required where burning is not permitted. Mulching or chipping will add an additional cost to the vine removal process due to equipment hire and labour costs. If considering using chipped wood as a soil additive, be aware that vine tissue infected with virus or trunk disease may infect newly planted vines or other susceptible crops. For information regarding vine removal and biosecurity, visit Vinehealth Australia's article on this topic: <https://vinehealth.com.au/2024/05/vine-removal-and-biosecurity/>

Managing removed vineyard posts



End of life options for posts will vary depending on the type of post. Disposal options for each post type are outlined below.

Steel post disposal

Re-use or Recycle

Steel posts can be re-used on your property, offered for sale in your local area or to scrap metal traders.

Dispose

Steel posts can be disposed via regular landfill.

Disposal of plastic, integrated posts

Re-use or Recycle

Plastic posts can be reused or recycled, depending on their integrity and composition.

Dispose

Plastic posts can be disposed via regular landfill.

Treated timber post disposal

Treated timber posts include copper chromium arsenic (CCA) and creosote treatments.

Re-use

Treated timber posts are durable and well-suited for reuse on. BlazeAid Australia accept treated posts for fencing. If donating or selling secondhand posts, bundle similar length posts, and place them somewhere easily accessible for collection. Dispose or safely store unusable parts.

Store

Transport costs associated with post disposal are expensive, making onsite storage a more cost-effective option. To stockpile posts safely, choose a site with easy vehicle access, away from waterways and fire hazards. Store CCA-treated posts separately from other treated timbers (e.g. creosote). Stack posts off the ground on bearers to prevent decay and keep piles neat and stable. For further details on safe storage of treated timber posts, visit:

https://www.wineaustralia.com/getmedia/839395b7-73d9-47af-89e1-0d7ee0ce3183/CCA_Stockpiling_poster.pdf

Dispose

Because of their toxic properties, treated posts must be disposed of through EPA-licensed landfill. Three S.A facilities offer this service, with disposal costs ranging \$290-\$550 per tonne (ex GST) (as at March 2025).

EPA-licensed facilities

- (i) Integrated Waste Services Dublin
Address: Corner Wingfield Road and Hines Road, Wingfield
Phone: 08 8348 5100
Website: www.iwsgroup.com.au
- (ii) Southern Waste ResourceCo
Address: Tatachilla Road, McLaren Vale
Phone: 08 8406 0300
Website: www.resourceco.com.au
- (iii) Cleanaway Inkerman Landfill
Address: Prime Road, Inkerman
Phone: 08 8867 1355
Website: www.cleanaway.com.au/inkerman-landfill-sa

For more information on management of used vineyard posts please visit the South Australian Wine Industry Association here: <https://www.winesa.asn.au/our-services/environment-sustainability/waste/>

Costs associated with vineyard removal

The cost of removing a vineyard and returning the land to level ground ranges from \$3,000 to \$10,000 per hectare and is driven by a range of factors (Table 2). The cost is generally lower when own labour and equipment are used to undertake one or more steps. Planting density, steep terrain and heavy reliance on contractors can all contribute to higher costs. If engaging contractors, clearly describe the scope of work you require to ensure accurate quoting. Quotes vary and may be provided on a per hectare, per vine, or per hour basis depending on the contractor and task complexity.

Table 2. Key factors affecting the cost of vineyard removal

Factor	Comment
Size of the block	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small, owner-operated vineyards may use their own time and equipment making the job cheaper and allowing the steps to be spread over a longer time.
Labour costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Labour costs vary based on whether the vineyard owner does part of the work or outsources some of the tasks.
Condition and configuration of the vineyard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vine age and size: older and larger vines are likely to require more time and effort to remove. Vine health status: living vines may require more time and effort to remove than dead vines. Row width and trellis type: narrow rows or complex trellis systems can increase removal time.
Waste disposal and recycling costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post disposal: if treated posts are being disposed to EPA-licensed landfill, disposal costs range from \$290-\$550 (ex GST) per tonne. Waste Transport: variable depending on distance to the disposal site.
Hidden costs and unexpected expenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult-to-remove strainers: deep strainers may require specialised machinery or extra time to remove. Labour-intensive tasks: if vines are too heavy for manual handling, they may need to be cut into smaller sections, increasing handling time. Logistical challenges: poor planning can lead to delays, increasing labour and machinery costs.

Planning checklist for vineyard removal

Use this checklist during the planning stage of a vineyard removal project to identify and complete key actions that will improve your project's efficiency and reduce its cost.

Vineyard removal

- Create a timeline to complete each step of vineyard removal, considering other seasonal tasks and waste removal.
- Identify which steps will be completed 'in-house' or by a contractor.
- For in-house steps, identify which machinery or equipment is available and what may need to be hired (e.g. excavators, post pullers, wire winders, balers etc.). Consult local contractors, neighbours/community, machinery hire businesses and obtain quotes.
- Record vineyard details to assist with contractor quotations and budgets:

Vineyard area to be removed	ha
Vine age	years
Row width, vine and post spacing*	Row: (m) Vine: (m) Post: (m)
Slope (flat, moderate, steep etc.)	
Post type(s)	
Trellis type	
Number of cordon wires	
Number of foliage wires	
Irrigation type	
Total length of dripper tube (if recycling)	

*Density (per ha)	=	10,000	÷	Post or vine spacing (m)	x	row width (m)
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10,000	÷	(m)	x	(m)	=	(vine density)
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10,000	÷	(m)	x	(m)	=	(post density)
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- Identify suitable local contractors and obtain multiple quotes. Consult your neighbours and others in your region for recommendations.
- Be mindful of biosecurity when hiring contractors; refer to Vinehealth Australia's factsheet: [VHA-Fact-Sheet-Earthworks-Contractors.pdf](#).
- Develop a budget for the scope of works to return your land to a levelled state.

Waste management

- Investigate reuse and/or options for dripper tube, wire, posts and vines.
- Investigate dripper tube recycling through Netafim's 'recoil and retrieval service'; contact for service fees and availability. Identify appropriate site for onsite storage. Identify landfill disposal options, associated fees and transport costs.
- Investigate scrap metal facilities for wire. Obtain quotes for transport.
- Identify suitable onsite storage location for posts, and any site upgrades required (e.g. creating a hard packed surface, or above ground storage). Contact EPA-licensed landfill to investigate post disposal costs. Obtain quotes for transport.
- If planning to burn vines, contact local council/CFS to identify allowable burning dates and any specific requirements. Identify suitable location for vine piles that will minimise impacts on neighbours and other operations.

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Government of South Australia

Department of Primary Industries
and Regions

References and further reading

Environment Protection Authority. 2024. Laws for burning in the open. Available from:
https://www.epa.sa.gov.au/files/12735_laws_for_burning_in_the_open.pdf

Wine Australia end-of-life solutions for vineyard posts: Available from:
<https://www.wineaustralia.com/sustainability/end-of-life-solutions-for-vineyard-posts>

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