



When to Sell Timber, Income Wise

Every woodland owner always wants to maximize his income from a timber sale. Many people would say you are crazy if you don't.

Achieving a high, fair price is possible, but somewhat difficult or tricky to accomplish, unless done correctly.

The higher the quality of timber, the easier it is to achieve a 'good' price. Quality sells, junk is junk. Let's talk about black walnut and white oak. For the last several years, black walnut is bringing a higher price than ever before. The demand is so high that some of today's 'veneer' logs were only considered high quality sawlogs in recent years. There are some things to consider, no, you really must do, to receive the best price for this high valued hardwood.

If there is enough good quality black walnut, I number the paint-marked saleable trees and sell the walnut separately or by itself. I never sell walnut or veneer quality white oak in the warm or hot weather because I know the price has dropped or is lower due to possible checking and splitting of log ends, staining, etc. I never sell black walnut species from around April 1st to near October 1st.

If I can get the landowner more money in cool or cold weather for the same trees, why sell when the weather is hot? Really good white oak stands with lots of veneer quality are treated like good black walnut sales. In an average stand of white oak I keep track of the really good 'veneer' potential logs, but sell the marked trees along with whatever other species I have marked.

On the opposite extreme, the red oak market is dead, and I cannot get a good price for good trees since the demand is not there. Remember, the logger must get a fair profit, too, and with no demand he can only sell most red oak for pallet prices.

If the price is down, don't sell. With most timber, in most cases, you have a several year window of opportunity to sell mature timber.

Watch the markets and try to sell when the prices are up or high and during the time of year when high quality trees bring more.

One major problem is that most timber is not veneer or grade log (lumber) quality. Low quality timber that brings pallet or blocking prices can usually be sold at any time of year and it brings the same. The common exception is when the mills get their log yards full, prices are cut to discourage loggers from bringing in more logs.

Just because the landowner keeps aware of price trends (everything seems to have highs and lows) and plans to sell weather-wise in order to receive the best price does not mean he will get a high, fair price. Why? If the landowner does not know the quality of his saleable timber, how many trees he is selling or the saleable board foot volume by species, he does not know what his timber is really worth. If the landowner doesn't know the worth of the timber, how will he know what is a fair price? Always get help from a professional forester to handle a timber sale. He or she will paint mark the trees for sale (the landowner now has control of what is being sold) and figure the estimated value by knowing how many trees of each species are being sold and their volume, using the area's log scale.

We almost always bid out our timber sales, get the landowner his money in advance of cutting, have a good Timber Sale Contract, and supervise the sale. Check with your Missouri Department of Conservation office for a list of professional foresters in your area.

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