Northern cattle welfare update
7 February 2019

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) is conducting an animal welfare response at a property in the Pilbara.

Aerial and on-ground activities to assess the immediate welfare of cattle found a significant number of cattle in poor condition with limited access to water, and in some cases feed. Operations involving trained department officers are continuing and humane destruction of cattle has been undertaken where required.

Emergency management activities to improve access for cattle in poor condition to water are being implemented at identified areas of the property. Work is also being progressed around assessing and equipping targeted bores.

The department’s Livestock Compliance Unit is investigating the matter regarding compliance under the Animal Welfare Act.

Local industry businesses have contacted the department to offer a range of assistance and DPIRD and the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage acknowledge and will seek to utilise these offers where suitable.

A separate investigation of compliance under the Act relating to a property in the Kimberley, which commenced in late December 2018, is continuing.

Animal welfare obligations

The department recognises the value of animal welfare and strives to ensure all animals receive appropriate standards of care.

While seasonal conditions are challenging, management is a critical part of maintaining animal welfare.

The department recognises and supports the efforts of pastoralists in the Northern Rangelands in remaining vigilant and committed to the responsible management of land and livestock over this period.

Seasonal conditions and rangelands assessments

Northern beef producers located in areas with challenging seasonal conditions are reminded to review their dry season action plans to ensure livestock have access to proper and adequate feed and water.

Make decisions while livestock are in good condition and ensure appropriate measures are in place to manage animal welfare if planning to muster early this year.

Seasonal information

Seasonal information forecasts and Rangelands assessments may assist decision making. The Bureau of Meteorology provides a range of seasonal forecast tools, including predicted rainfall for the coming week, and short and long-term climate outlooks are available online at bom.gov.au.

Rangelands monitoring

In January, the department conducted aerial rangeland condition surveys of parts of the Kimberley and Pilbara regions with an emphasis on broad scale rangeland condition,
gauging surface water availability, stream flows, dry standing feed and new pasture growth for livestock.

**Kimberley**

For large areas of the Kimberley, the onset of the wet season was up to three weeks later than the long term average, delaying new season pasture growth and has in some areas failed to fully develop.

Pockets of areas in the west Kimberley have received well below average rainfall to date and pastoralists are likely to be required to undertake management strategies early to avoid animal welfare and rangeland condition issues from mid to late 2019.

In the East Kimberley, areas around Kununurra have reasonable new pasture growth, surface water and some rivers have steady flow.

Properties around Halls Creek, and following a below average wet season in 2017/18, have very limited surface water and are relying on bore water, with limited dry feed available for cattle. Unless rainfall is received, properties in this area may also have to act early with management strategies to avoid animal welfare and rangeland condition issues.

**Pilbara**

In the Pilbara region, rainfall has also been below average with above average temperatures and the seasonal outlook is for below average rainfall.

Widespread but patchy thunderstorms have provided some relief, with isolated significant falls. Some creeks and rivers are flowing however, management strategies may need to be implemented in the event that the season fails.

While some green feed is available, without a good season break pasture quality and livestock condition will continue to decline. This will require management strategies such as some removal of stock, weaning and feeding strategies to protect vulnerable animals and maintain breeders.

**Tools for managing livestock in dry conditions**

For more detailed seasonal information related to the Northern Rangelands, and tools and advice for managing livestock in dry conditions, [click here](#).

**More information**

For queries or information relating to animal welfare and livestock management and in the Northern Rangelands, please contact the department’s offices at Kununurra on +61 (0)8 9166 4000 or Broome on +61 (0)8 9194 1400.

Alternatively, contact one of the following officers direct:

**Industry liaison – Northern Rangelands**

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**Industry liaison – Industry associations**

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Reporting animal cruelty

If a person believes someone has caused harm to, mistreated or been cruel to an animal, or is about to, they should contact the RSPCA to report it. [RSPCA online complaints form](mailto:)

1300 278 3589.

The RSPCA may refer some reports of cruelty in relation to commercial animals to DPIRD’s [Livestock Compliance Unit](mailto:livestock.compliance@dpird.wa.gov.au) for appropriate follow-up.