

# Northern Territory Pastoral Feed Outlook

## March 2019

The purpose of this quarterly outlook is to summarise information relevant to the pastoral industry such as current feed supplies, seasonal conditions, the development of drought conditions in central Australia and fire risk. You can subscribe to receive the Outlook [here](#).

You can see the entire document and all districts by continuing to scroll through this file. If you are interested in selected sections, you can click on the links below.

[Summary of current situation & trends - all districts](#)

[Northern Territory Seasonal Outlook – as at March 2019](#)

Individual District Summaries:

[Darwin District](#)

[Katherine District](#)

[Victoria River District](#)

[Sturt Plateau District](#)

[Roper District](#)

[Gulf District](#)

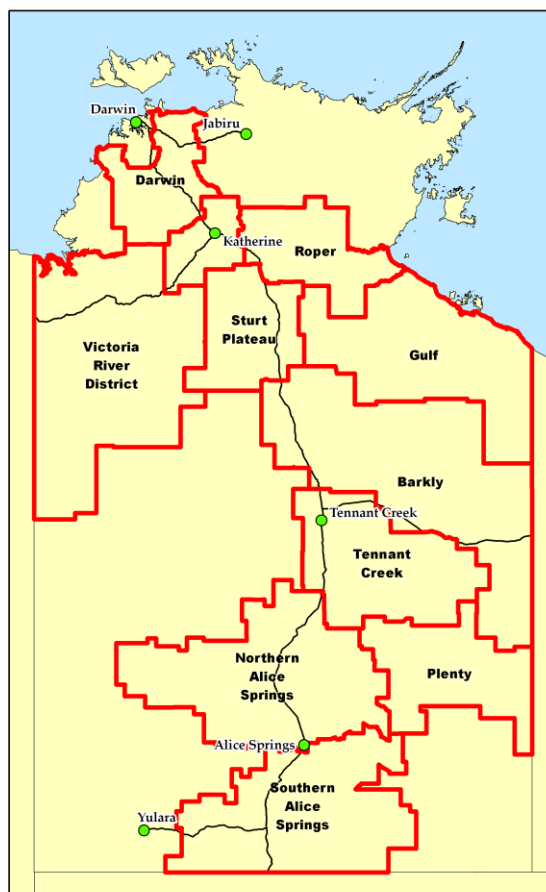
[Barkly District](#)

[Tennant Creek District](#)

[Northern Alice Springs District](#)

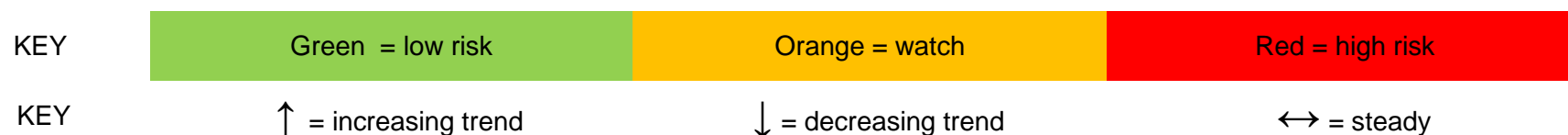
[Plenty District](#)

[Southern Alice Springs District](#)



## Summary of current situation and trends – all districts – March 2019

Feed conditions have dramatically deteriorated in several districts in the past four months. The predicted late onset to the northern wet season materialised and total rainfall is some of the lowest on record for some districts. As at 1 March 2019 a large part of the NT from about Larrimah down to Alice Springs has experienced below-average pasture growth for the 2018/19 season. The majority of this area is experiencing extremely low growth (lowest 10% of years on record). As a result, large areas of the Barkly and Alice Springs districts in particular, are currently showing low to extremely low levels of standing dry matter (<500 kg/ha). BOM forecasts suggest there is an average to below-average chance of exceeding median rainfall in the coming months. The chance of exceeding median pasture growth between now and the end of the wet season is below-average to extremely low in many districts.



Northern Territory Pastoral Districts												
Indicator	Darwin	Katherine	VRD	Sturt Plateau	Roper	Gulf	Barkly	Tennant Creek	Northern Alice Springs	Plenty	Southern Alice Springs	Comments
2018/2019 total pasture growth	↓	↔	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	Arrows indicate trend compared to the long-term median (for this time of year).
Current estimated standing biomass	↑	↑	↑	↔	↑	↓	↓	↔	↓	↓	↓	Arrows indicate trend since previous quarter.
Current fire risk	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	Arrows indicate the trend since previous quarter.
Current seasonal outlook	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	Arrows indicate the trend since previous quarter and taking into account the forecasted model predictions.

For further information about this Outlook, please contact Chris Materne on 08 8951 8135 or Dionne Walsh on 08 8999 2178

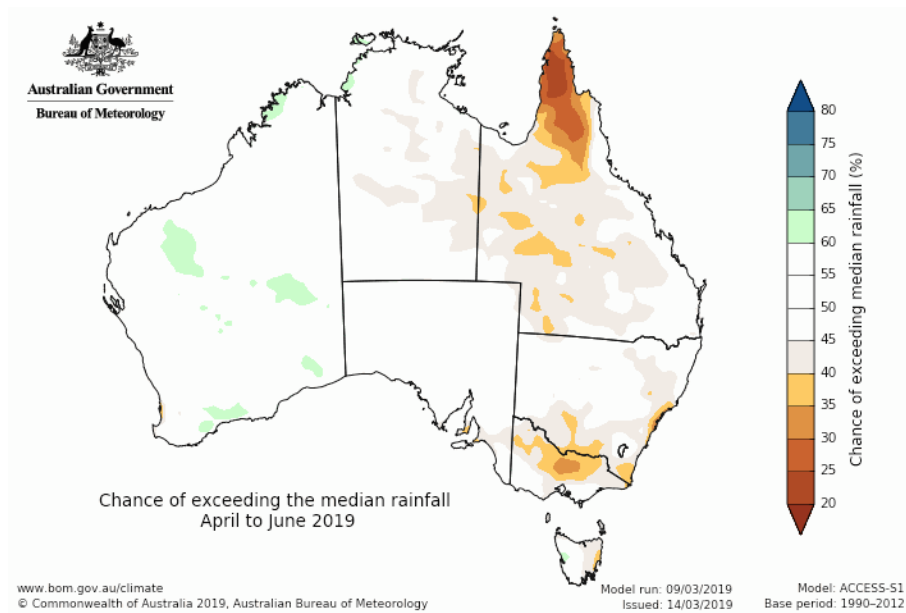
# Northern Territory Seasonal Outlook as at March 2019\*

Sourced from the Australian Bureau of Meteorology

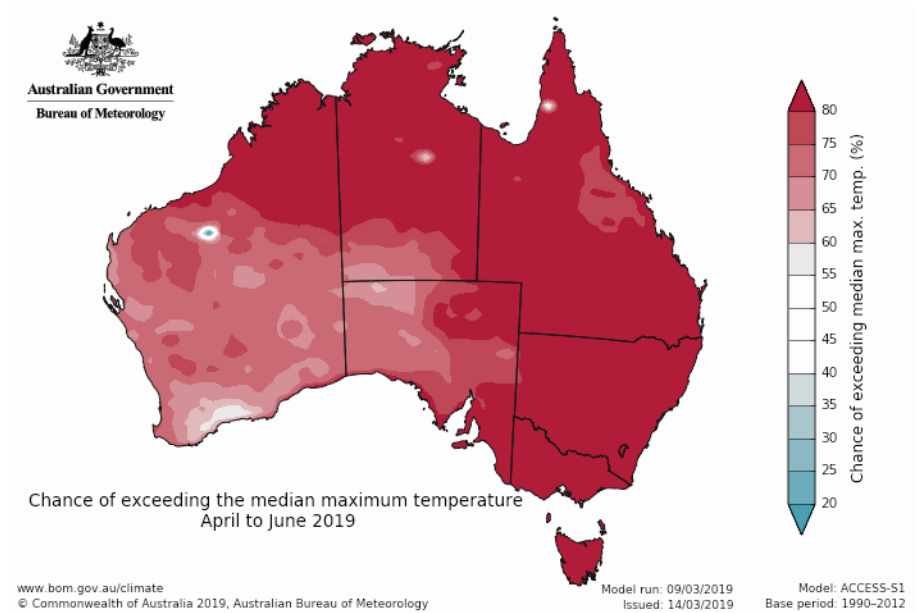
\*This seasonal outlook was correct at the time of publication. For the most up-to-date seasonal outlook, please go to the [“climate outlook”](#) section of the BOM website.

The outlook for April to June 2019 indicates that:

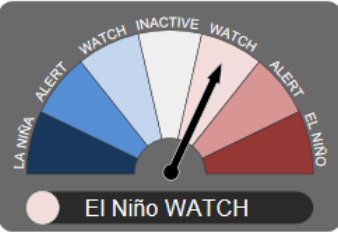
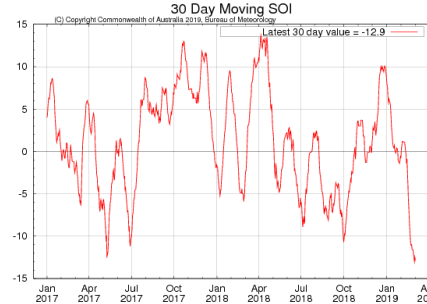
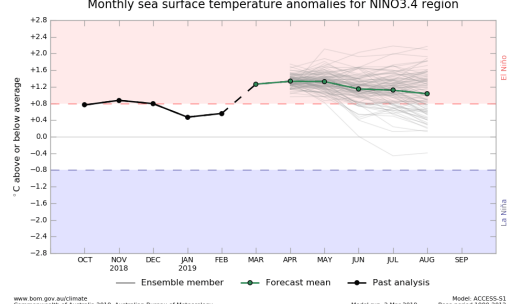
- **Average to Drier** conditions are expected across most of the NT.
- **Warmer** than average days and nights are likely for almost all of the NT.

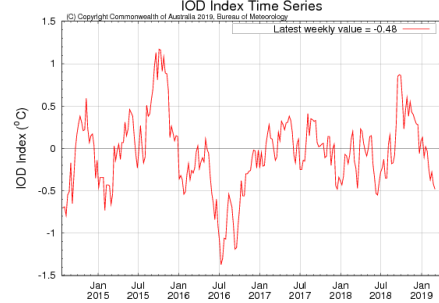
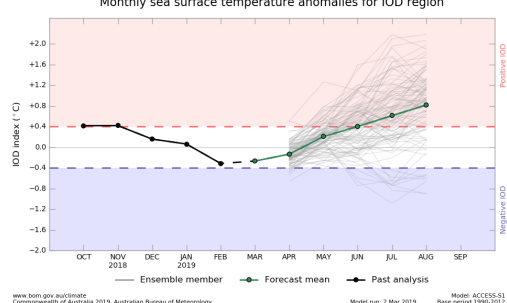


Chance of exceeding the median rainfall  
April to June 2019



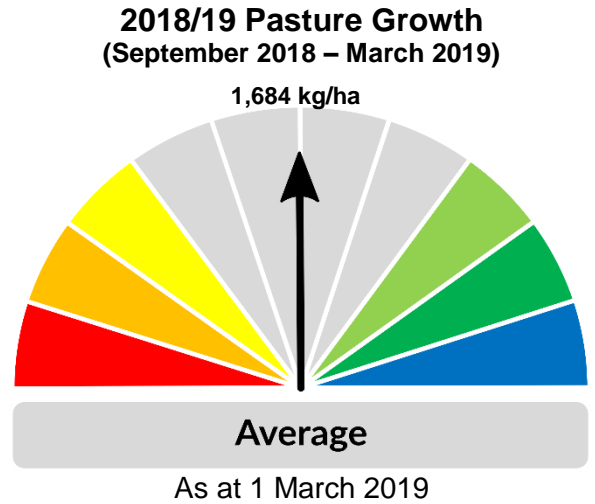
Chance of exceeding the median maximum temperature  
April to June 2019

<p><b>Seasonal Indicator</b></p>	<p><b>Comments</b> (sourced from the Australian Bureau of Meteorology)</p>
<p><b>EI Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO)</b></p> <p><a href="#">Bureau of Meteorology ENSO Wrap-Up</a></p> <p>Current outlook: <b>Neutral</b></p> <p>ENSO status: <b>Watch</b></p> 	<p><b>The El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is currently neutral, but sea surface temperatures across nearly the entire tropical Pacific Ocean have warmed over the past fortnight, and have touched on El Niño thresholds.</b></p> <p>The Bureau's outlook remains at El Niño WATCH, meaning there is approximately a 50% chance of El Niño developing during the southern hemisphere autumn or winter; twice the normal likelihood.</p> <p>However, El Niño predictions made in early autumn tend to have lower accuracy than predictions made at other times of the year. This means that current forecasts of the ENSO state beyond May should be used with some caution.</p> <p>El Niño typically results in below average rainfall for southern Australia during autumn and for eastern Australia during winter and spring. The March to May climate outlook, which factors in ENSO and other climate influences, indicates autumn is likely to be drier than average for the eastern half of Australia.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;">   </div> <p>To see larger versions of these images, go to the SOI and Outlooks tabs at <a href="#">Bureau of Meteorology ENSO Wrap-Up</a></p>

<p><b>Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD)</b></p> <p><a href="#">Bureau of Meteorology ENSO Wrap-Up</a></p>	<p><b>The Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) is currently neutral</b></p>
<p>Current outlook: <b>Neutral</b></p>	<p>Surface waters are warmer than average across most of the Indian Ocean, but near average temperatures across the north of the Basin. This has resulted in the negative Dipole Mode Index values.</p> <p>Due to the movement of the monsoon trough in the Indian Ocean, the IOD typically has little influence on Australian climate from December to April.</p> <p>All of the six international climate models surveyed by the Bureau indicate that the IOD will be neutral for March. By May, one model indicates a positive IOD may form, with three models predicting positive IOD values during July.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;">   </div> <p>To see larger versions of these images, go to <a href="#">IOD Time Series</a> and the Indian Ocean tab at <a href="#">Bureau of Meteorology ENSO Wrap-Up</a></p>

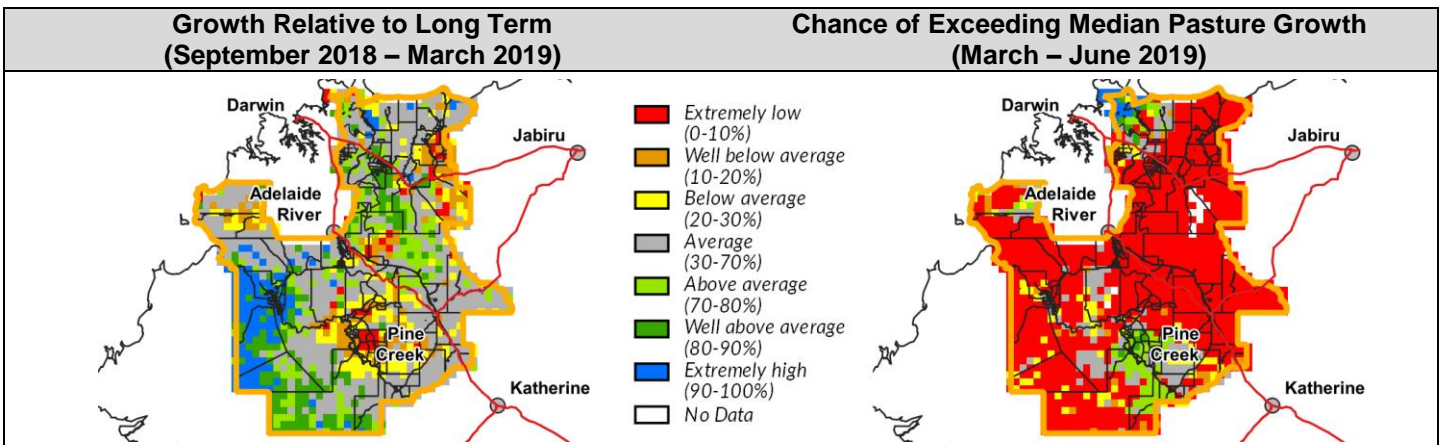
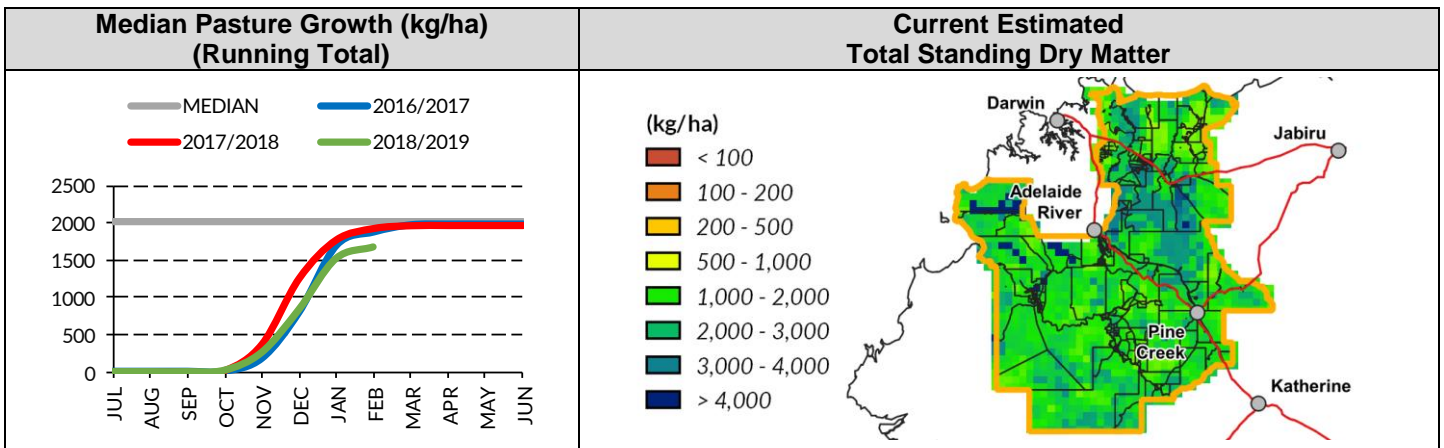
# Darwin District

- The 2018/19 pasture growth for the district as a whole is average, however the inconsistent rainfall across the district has resulted in wide variation.
- There are pockets of the district experiencing below-average and above-average growth.
- The previous two seasons (2017/18 and 2016/17) were considered average for pasture growth.
- 9% of the district has been burnt since 1 July 2018.



In a typical wet season, pasture growth in the Darwin region tends to be limited by available soil nitrogen rather than soil moisture. Therefore, a poor wet season may not generally affect the total quantity of pasture grown on upland country.

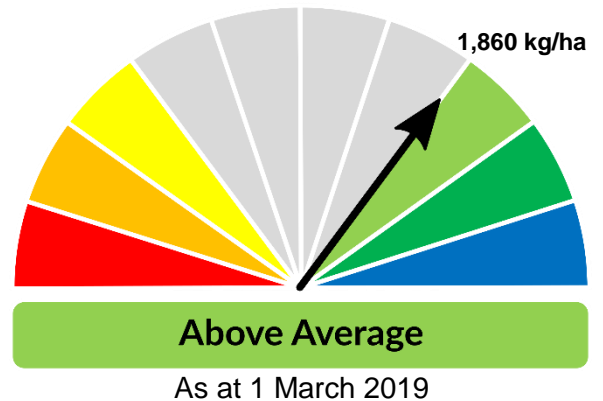
As at 1 March 2019				
(% of district)	<1,000kg/ha	1,000 - 2,000kg/ha	2,000 - 3,000kg/ha	>3,000kg/ha
2018/19 Pasture Growth	0%	80%	19%	1%
Total Standing Dry Matter	0%	25%	55%	20%



# Katherine District

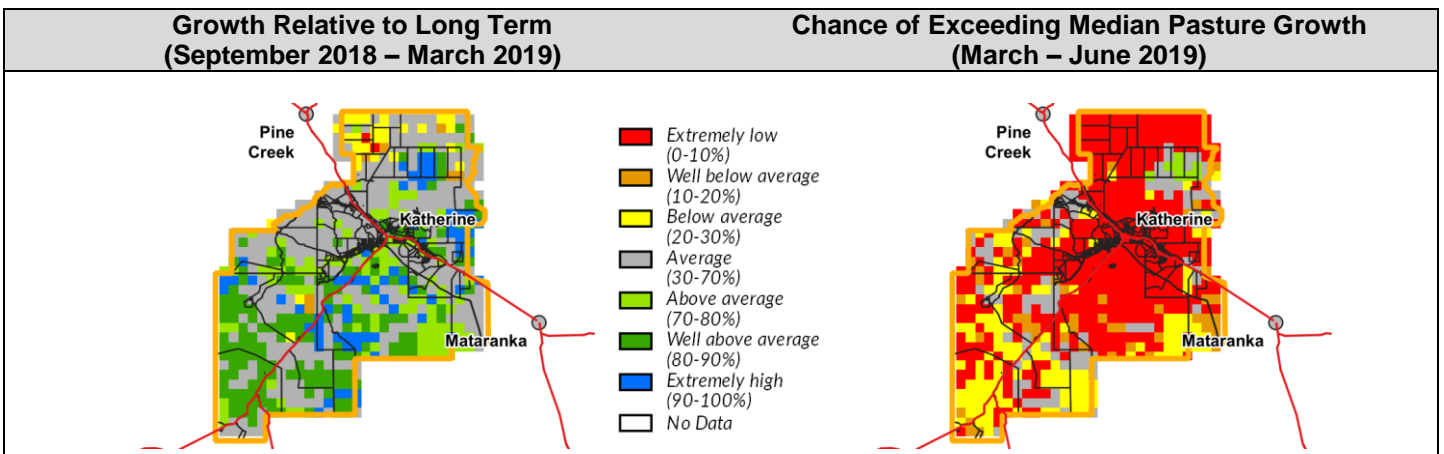
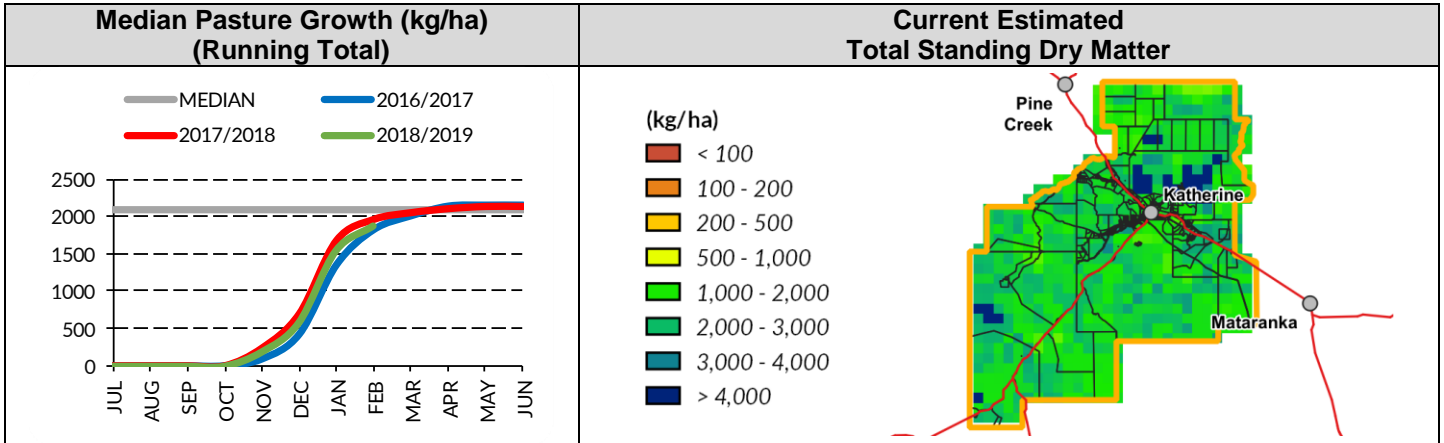
- The 2018/19 pasture growth for the district as a whole is slightly above-average, however a small area in the north is showing below-average growth.
- The previous two seasons (2017/18 and 2016/17) were considered average for pasture growth.
- 23% of the district has been burnt since 1 July 2018.

**2018/19 Pasture Growth**  
(September 2018 – March 2019)



In a typical wet season, pasture growth in the Katherine region tends to be limited by available soil nitrogen rather than soil moisture. Therefore, a poor wet season may not generally affect the total quantity of pasture grown.

As at 1 March 2019				
(% of district)	<1,000kg/ha	1,000 - 2,000kg/ha	2,000 - 3,000kg/ha	>3,000kg/ha
2018/19 Pasture Growth	0%	64%	36%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	0%	9%	68%	23%

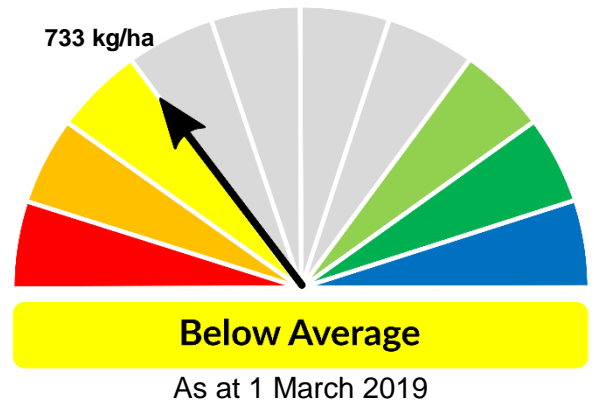




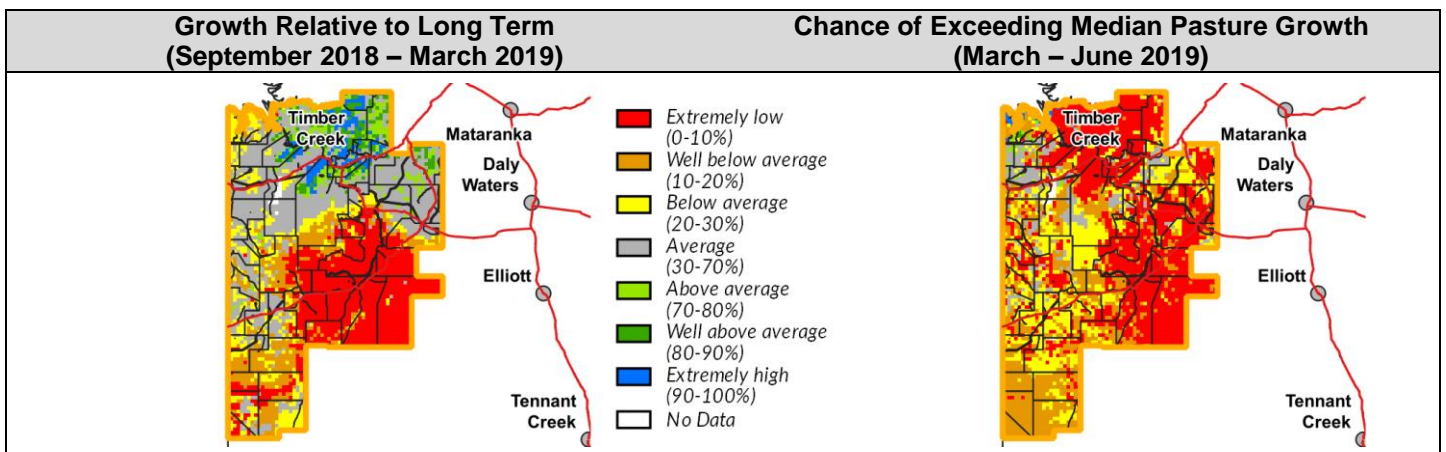
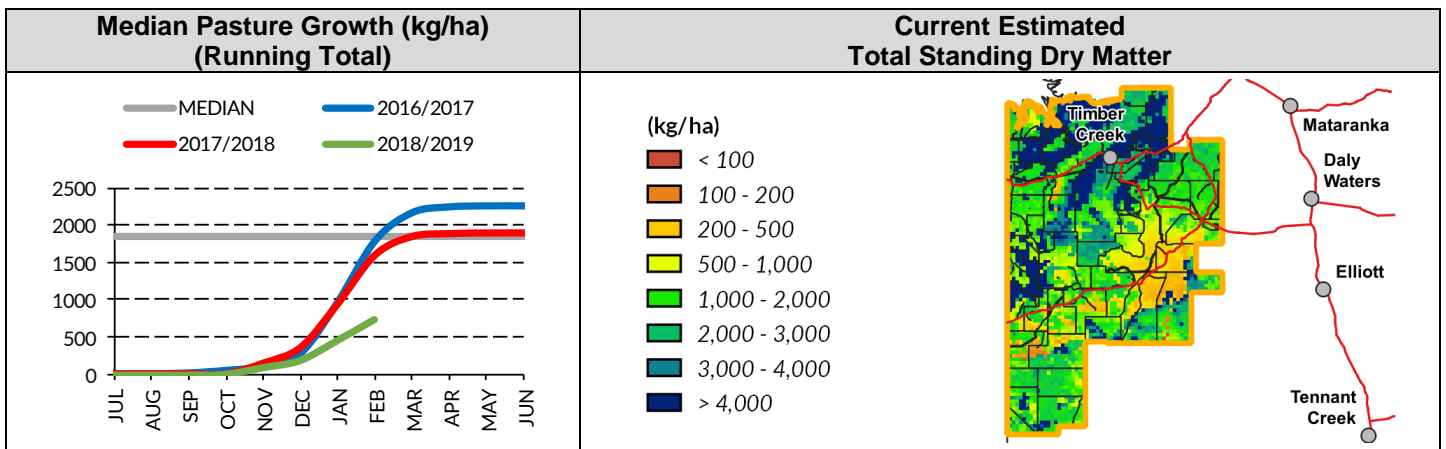
# Victoria River District

- The 2018/19 pasture growth for the district as a whole is now below-average, however growth varies considerably across the district.
- Average to above-average conditions are being experienced in the north, but a large area across the southern half is showing extremely low growth (lowest 10% of years on record).
- Pasture growth in 2017/18 was similar to the long-term median but a lot lower than the good season in 2016/17.
- 14% of the district has been burnt since 1 July 2018.

**2018/19 Pasture Growth**  
(September 2018 – March 2019)



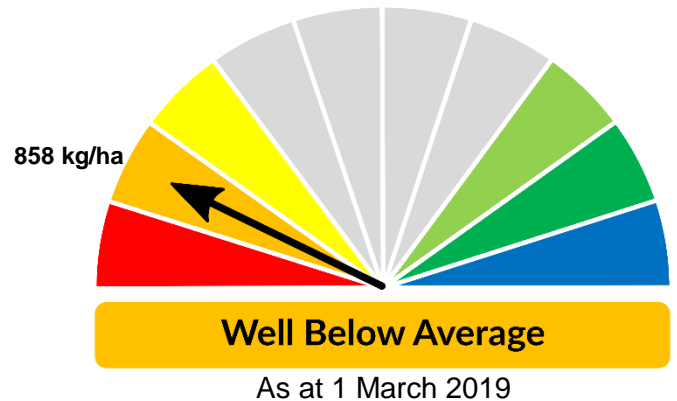
As at 1 March 2019				
(% of district)	<1,000kg/ha	1,000 - 2,000kg/ha	2,000 - 3,000kg/ha	>3,000kg/ha
2018/19 Pasture Growth	58%	27%	14%	1%
Total Standing Dry Matter	13%	25%	30%	32%



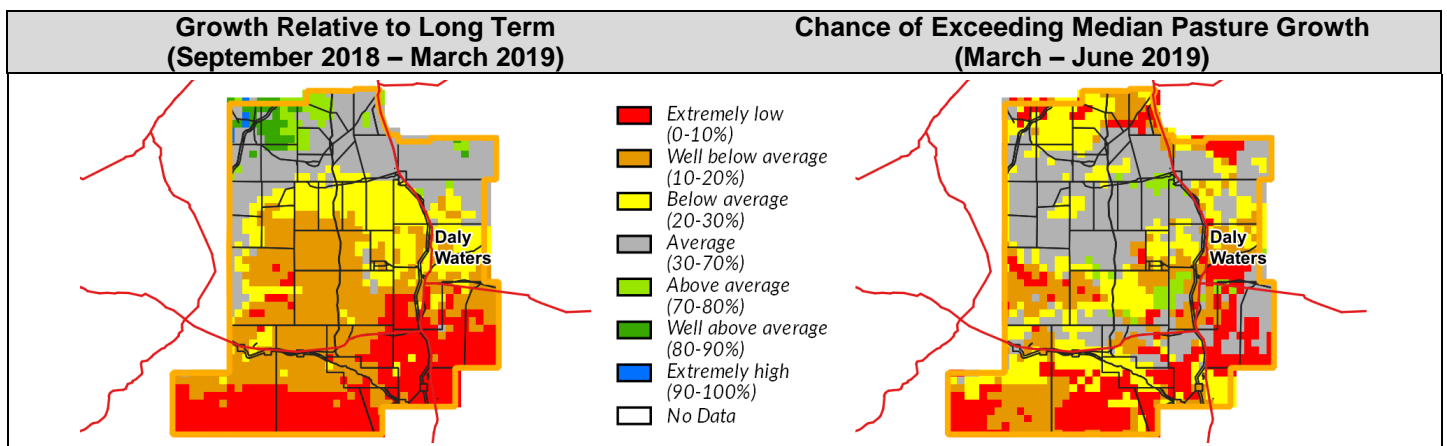
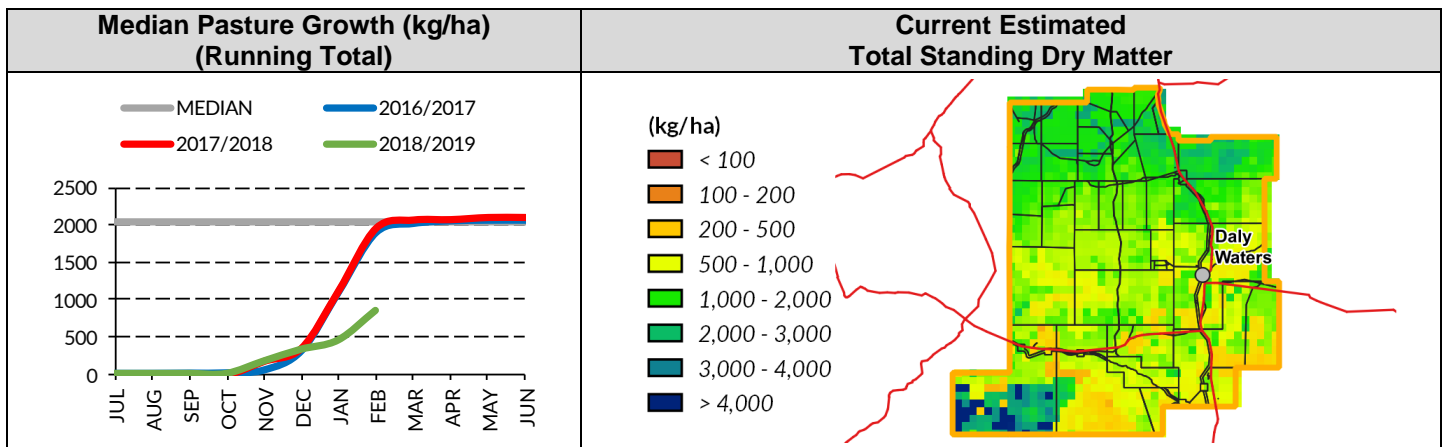
# Sturt Plateau District

- The 2018/19 pasture growth for the district as a whole is now well below-average (lowest 17% of years on record), with the majority of the district showing below-average to extremely low pasture growth (lowest 10% of years on record).
- A small area in the north of the district is experiencing above-average growth.
- The previous two seasons (2017/18 and 2016/17) were considered average for pasture growth.
- 12% of the district has been burnt since 1 July 2018.

**2018/19 Pasture Growth**  
(September 2018 – March 2019)



As at 1 March 2019				
(% of district)	<1,000kg/ha	1,000 - 2,000kg/ha	2,000 - 3,000kg/ha	>3,000kg/ha
2018/19 Pasture Growth	60%	35%	5%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	20%	53%	20%	7%

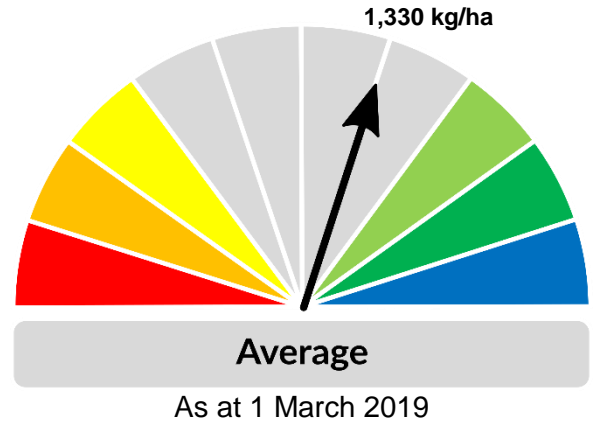




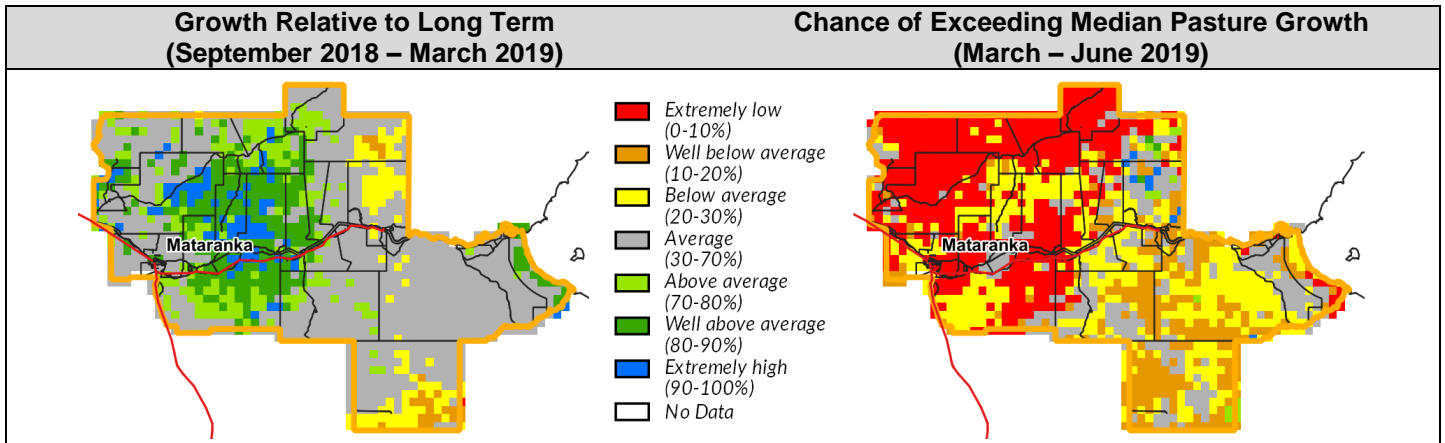
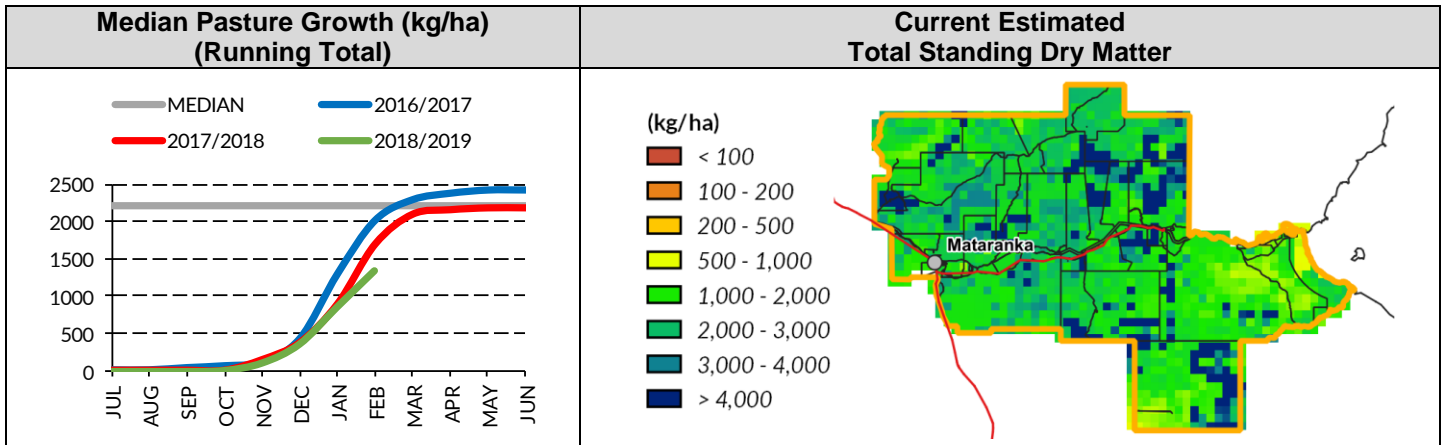
# Roper District

- The 2018/19 pasture growth for the district as a whole is average, however growth varies considerably across the district.
- A large area in the western part of the district is experiencing above-average to well above-average growth. Areas of below-average growth are being experienced in the northeast and in the south.
- Pasture growth in 2017/18 was similar to the long-term median, but slightly lower than the above-average season in 2016/17.
- 24% of the district has been burnt since 1 July 2018.

**2018/19 Pasture Growth**  
(September 2018 – March 2019)



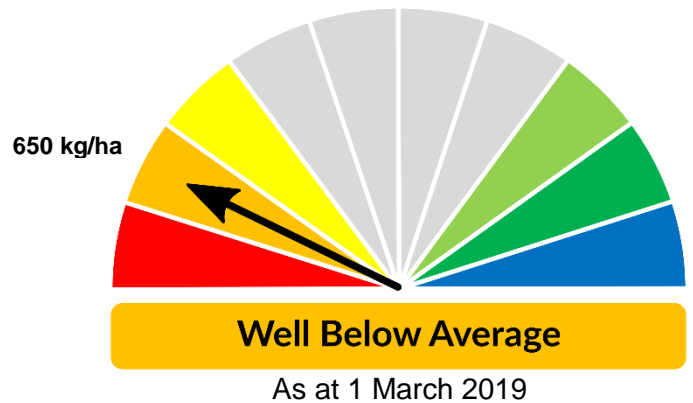
As at 1 March 2019				
(% of district)	<1,000kg/ha	1,000 - 2,000kg/ha	2,000 - 3,000kg/ha	>3,000kg/ha
2018/19 Pasture Growth	18%	64%	18%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	1%	19%	51%	29%



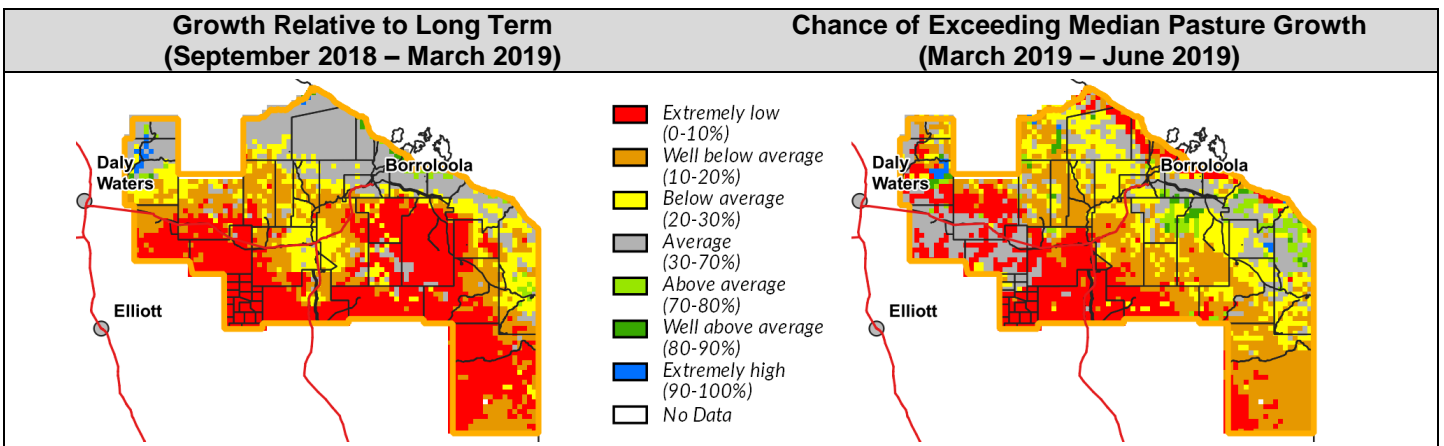
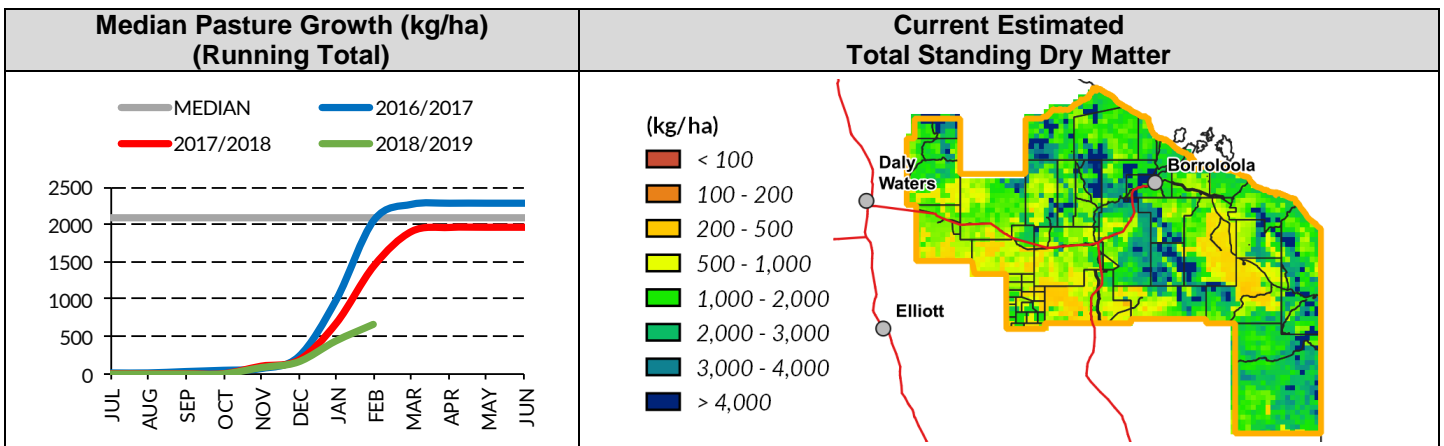
# Gulf District

- The 2018/19 pasture growth for the district as a whole is well below-average (lowest 14% of years on record).
- Large areas of the district are experiencing extremely low pasture growth (lowest 10% of years on record).
- Pasture growth in 2017/18 was similar to the long-term median, but lower than the good season in 2016/17.
- 20% of the district has been burnt since 1 July 2018.

**2018/19 Pasture Growth**  
(September 2018 – March 2019)



As at 1 March 2019				
(% of district)	<1,000kg/ha	1,000 - 2,000kg/ha	2,000 - 3,000kg/ha	>3,000kg/ha
2018/19 Pasture Growth	72%	27%	1%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	14%	40%	27%	19%



# Barkly District

- The 2018/19 pasture growth for the district as a whole is extremely low (lowest 6% of years on record) - a 1 in 20 year event.
- Much of the district has received extremely low to no pasture growth this season.
- The majority of the district is now showing very low levels of pasture biomass (<500 kg/ha). Large areas have extremely low levels (<100kg/ha).
- The south-east corner of the district experienced very poor growth last season. Although average growth has occurred there this season, very low pasture biomass levels persist (<200 kg/ha).
- 4% of the district has been burnt since 1 July 2018.

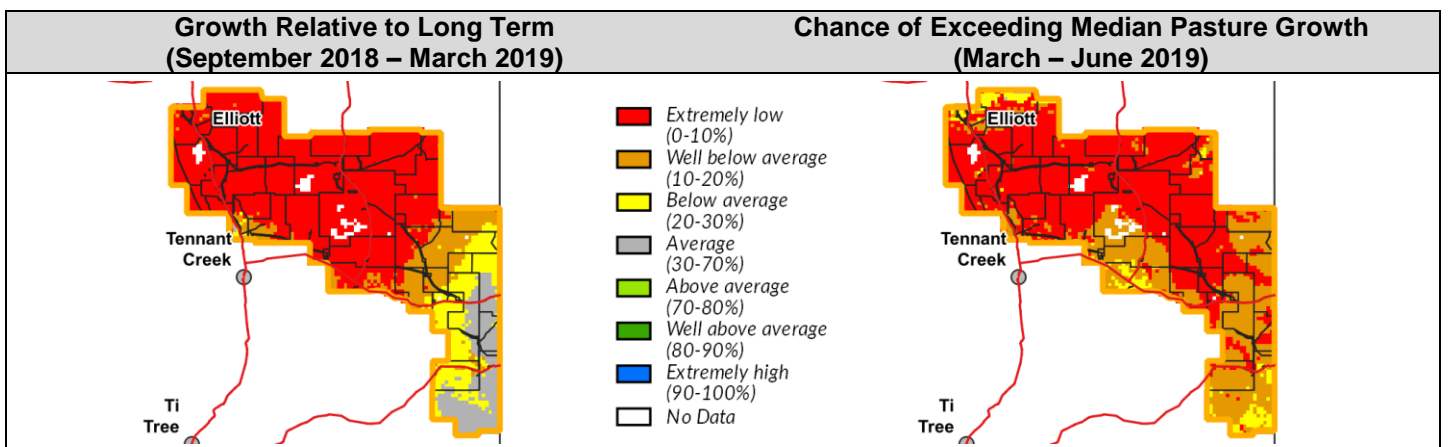
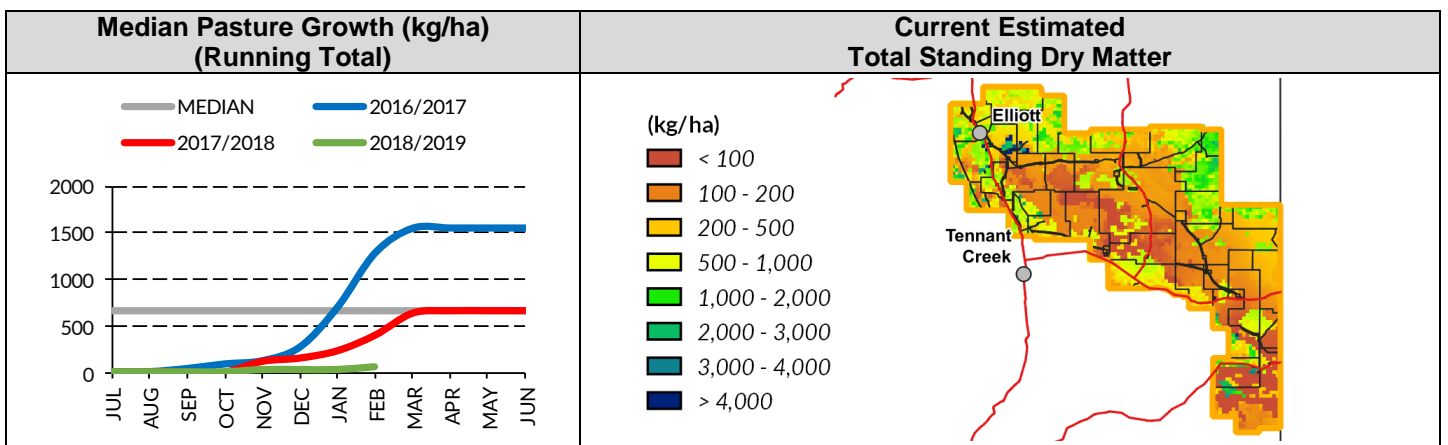
**2018/19 Pasture Growth**  
(September 2018 – March 2019)



As at 1 March 2019

Even if good rainfall occurs in the coming weeks, the growing season will be short, so large areas of the Barkly district are at risk of feed shortages during 2019.

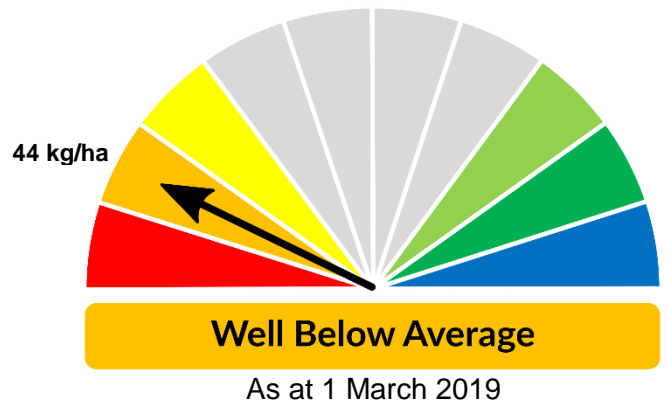
As at 1 March 2019				
(% of district)	<250kg/ha	250 - 500kg/ha	500 - 1,000kg/ha	>1,000kg/ha
2018/19 Pasture Growth	92%	7%	1%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	29%	27%	17%	27%



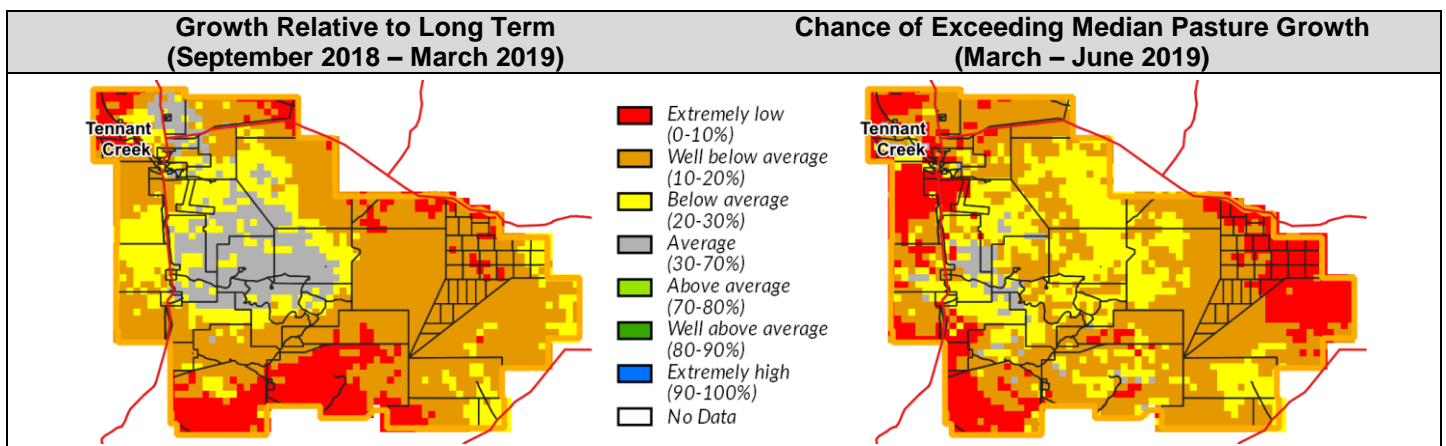
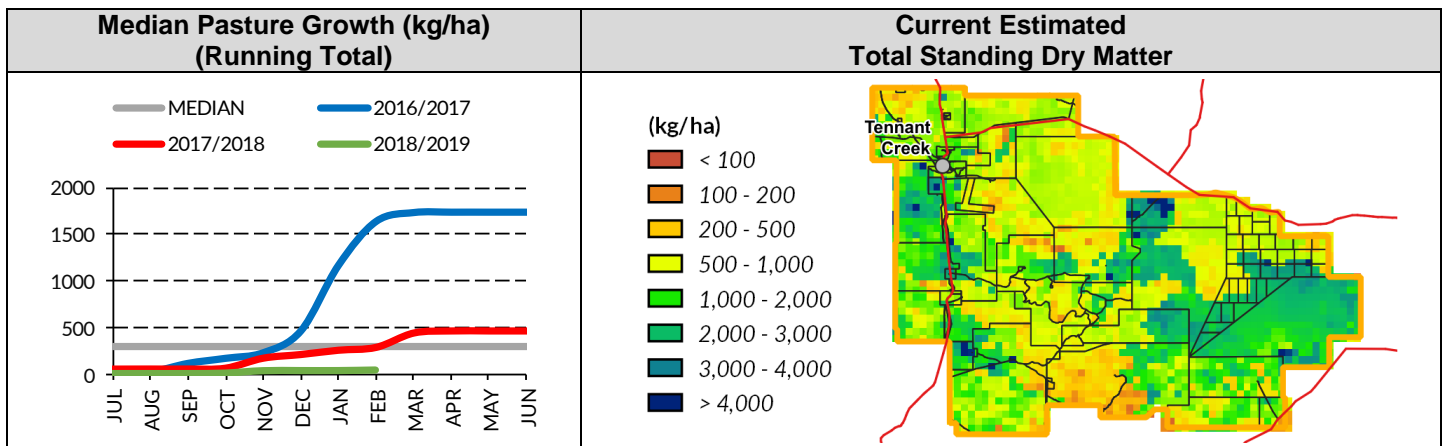
# Tennant Creek District

- The 2018/19 pasture growth for the district as a whole is well below-average (lowest 16% of years on record).
- With the exception of the central area, that has experienced average growth, much of the district has received below-average to extremely low growth (lowest 10% of years on record).
- Pasture growth in 2017/18 was similar to the long-term median, but much lower than the exceptional season in 2016/17.
- 3% of the district has been burnt since 1 July 2018.

**2018/19 Pasture Growth**  
(September 2018 – March 2019)



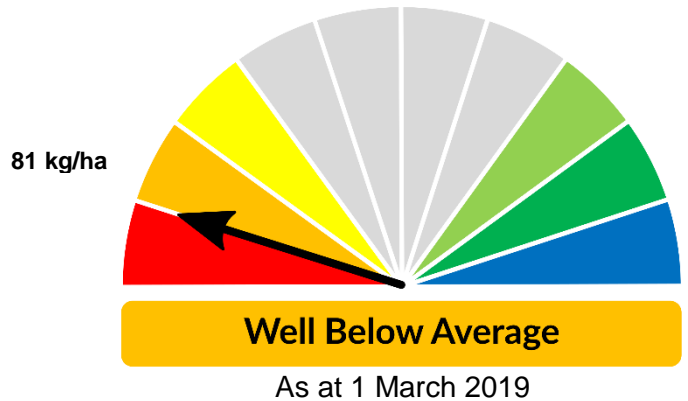
As at 1 March 2019				
(% of district)	<250kg/ha	250 - 500kg/ha	500 - 1,000kg/ha	>1,000kg/ha
2018/19 Pasture Growth	98%	2%	0%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	1%	3%	23%	73%



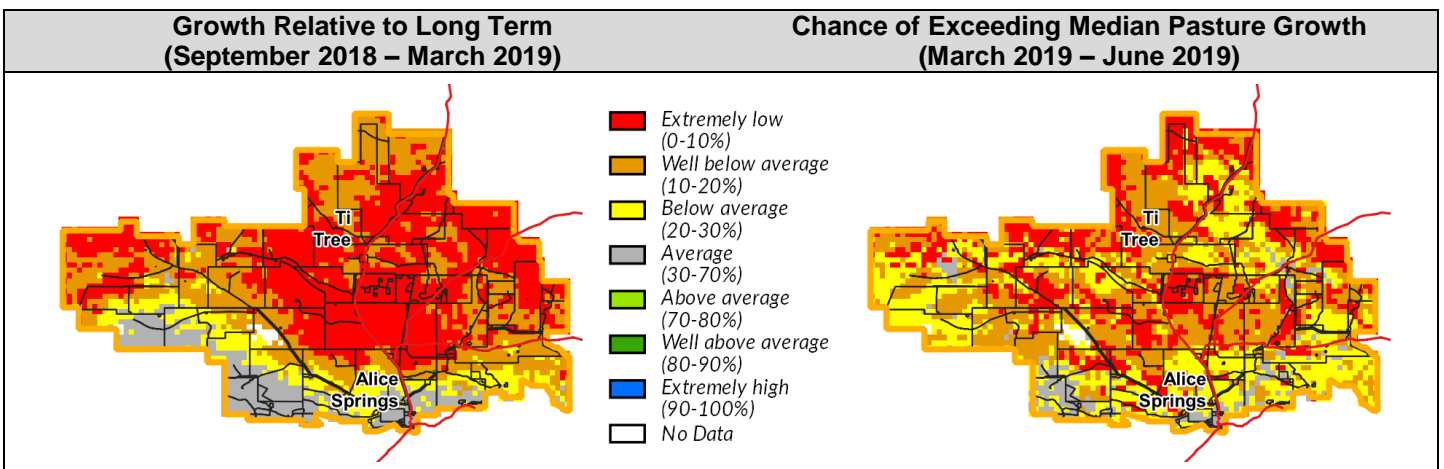
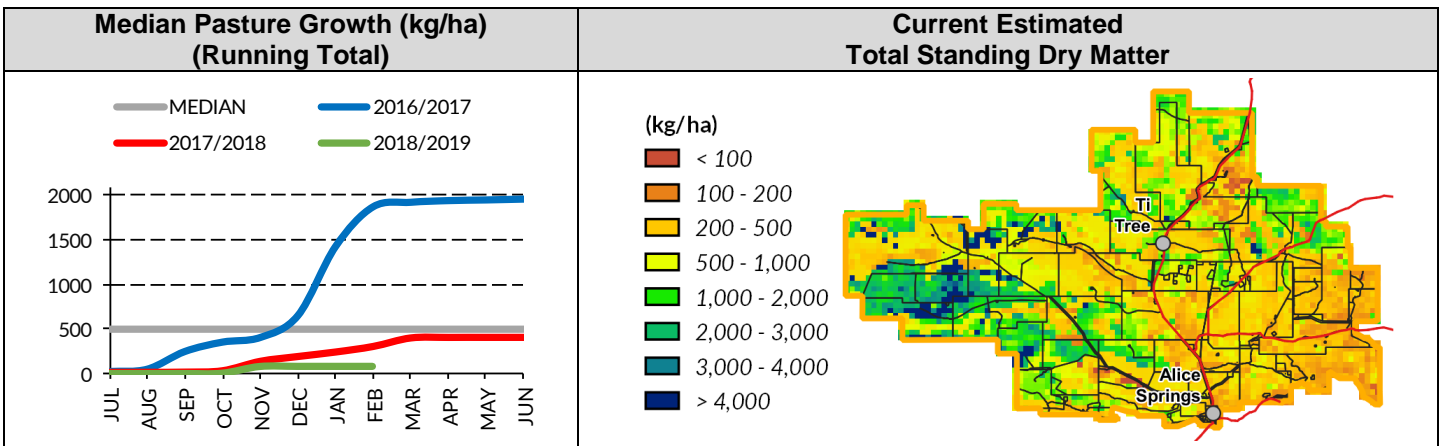
## Northern Alice Springs District

- The 2018/19 pasture growth for the district as a whole is well below-average, with the majority of the district showing extremely low growth (lowest 10% of years on record).
- Patchy rain across the district in November 2018 resulted in some pasture growth but conditions have deteriorated again in the past four months, with virtually no growth being experienced.
- Pasture growth in 2017/18 was slightly lower than the long-term median and very much lower than the exceptional season in 2016/17.
- 4% of the district has been burnt since 1 July 2018.

**2018/19 Pasture Growth**  
(September 2018 – March 2019)



As at 1 March 2019				
(% of district)	<250kg/ha	250 - 500kg/ha	500 - 1,000kg/ha	>1,000kg/ha
2018/19 Pasture Growth	96%	4%	0%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	2%	19%	42%	37%

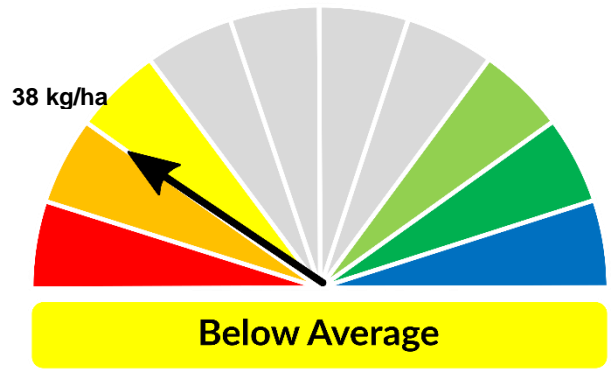




# Plenty District

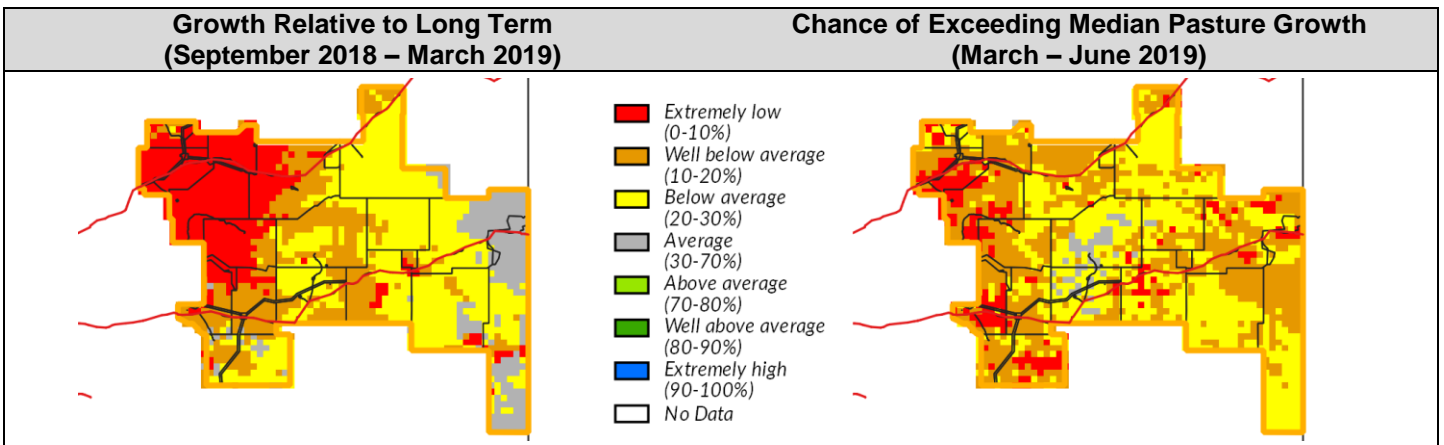
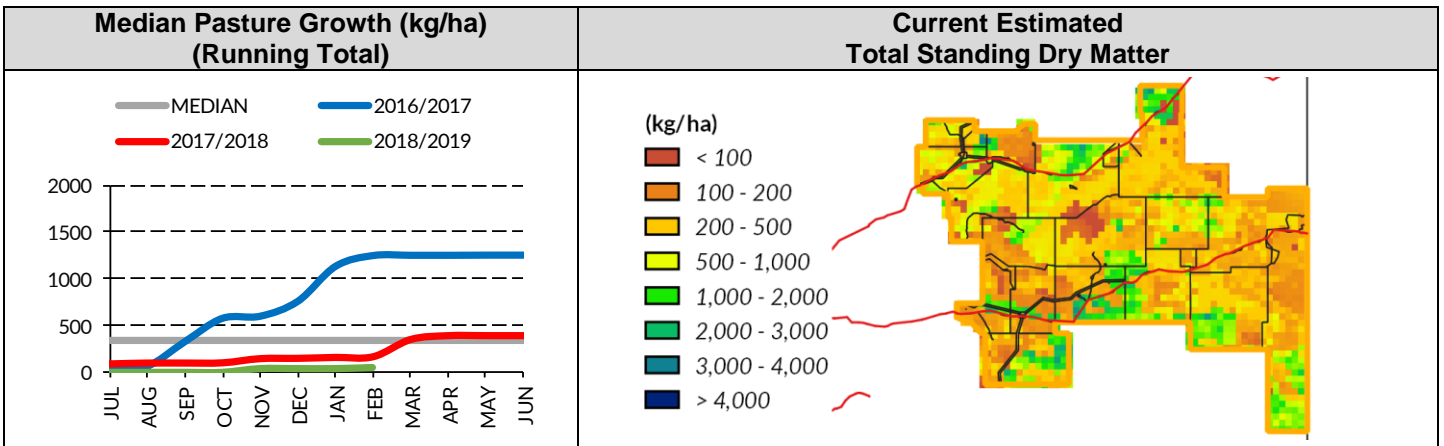
- The 2018/19 pasture growth for the district as a whole is below-average (lowest 21% of years on record). The majority of the NW corner is showing extremely low growth (lowest 10% of years on record).
- Large areas of very low pasture biomass (<200 kg/ha) are beginning to emerge across the district.
- Pasture growth in 2017/18 was slightly lower than the long-term median and very much lower than the very good season in 2016/17.
- Less than 1% of the district has been burnt since 1 July 2018.

**2018/19 Pasture Growth**  
(September 2018 – March 2019)



As at 1 March 2019

As at 1 March 2019				
(% of district)	<250kg/ha	250 - 500kg/ha	500 - 1,000kg/ha	>1,000kg/ha
2018/19 Pasture Growth	100%	0%	0%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	12%	34%	31%	23%

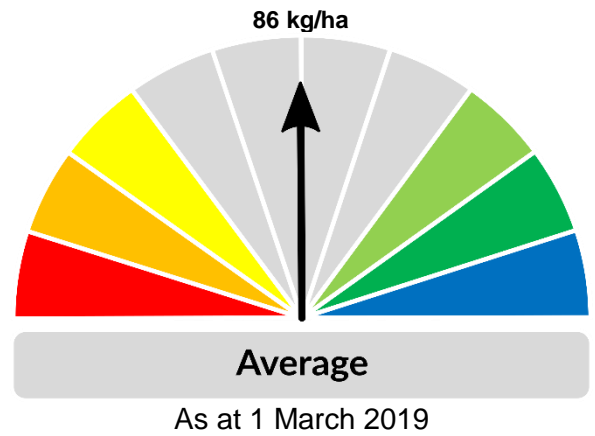




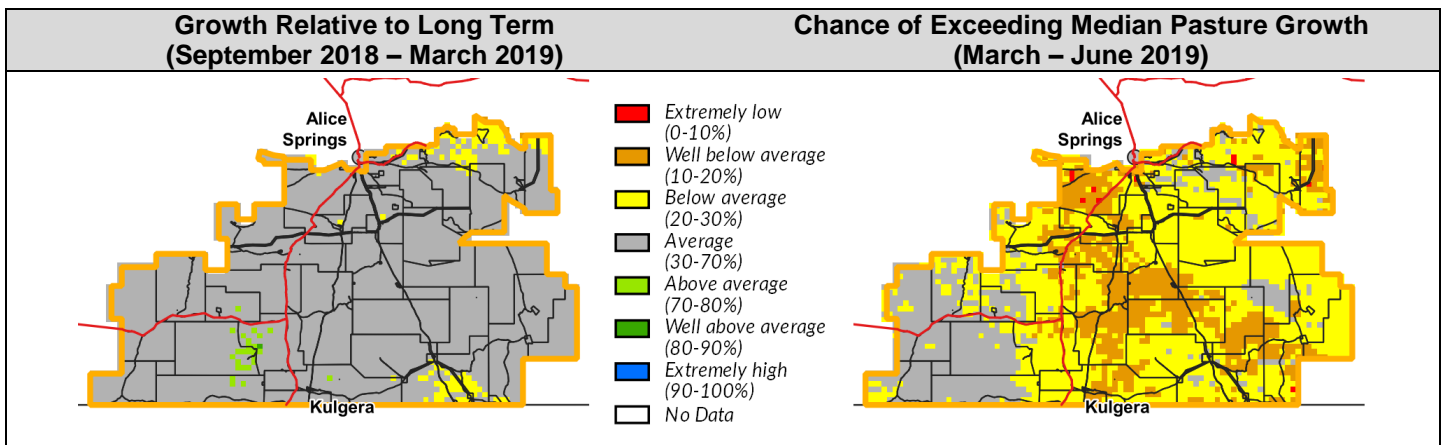
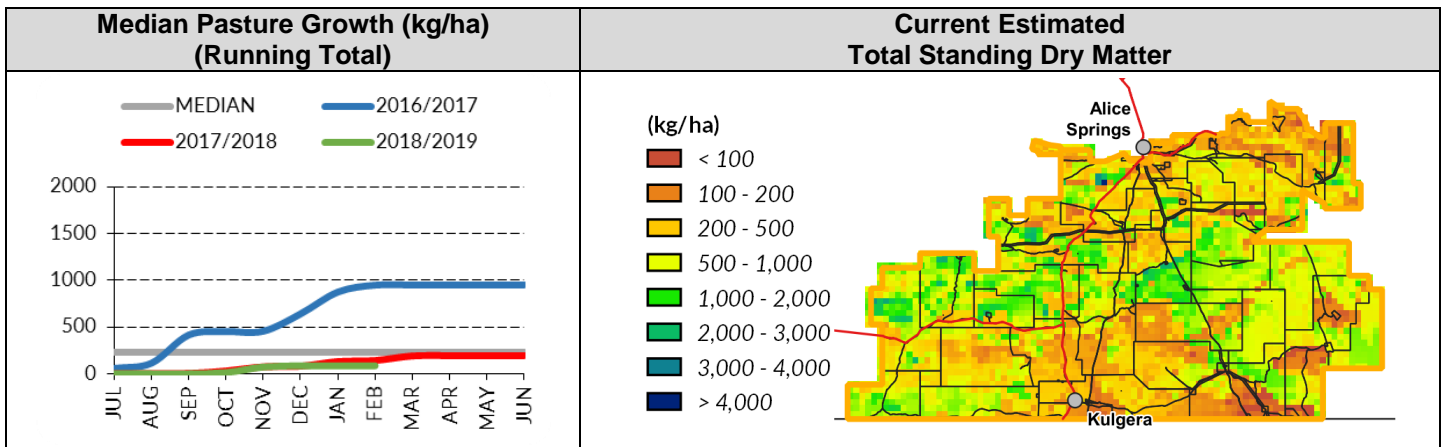
## Southern Alice Springs District

- The 2018/19 pasture growth for the district as a whole is average as a result of rainfall experienced in November 2018.
- Pasture growth in 2017/18 was similar to the long-term median, but much lower than the very good season in 2016/17.
- 1% of the district has been burnt since 1 July 2018.

**2018/19 Pasture Growth**  
(September 2018 – March 2019)



As at 1 March 2019				
(% of district)	<250kg/ha	250 - 500kg/ha	500 - 1,000kg/ha	>1,000kg/ha
2018/19 Pasture Growth	95%	5%	0%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	10%	19%	34%	37%



## Pasture information

The pasture and fire risk information in this document is derived from AussieGRASS. AussieGRASS is a model that simulates pasture growth and standing biomass using climate data, vegetation mapping, fire history and regional estimates of grazing pressure. The model can be used to track simulated pasture growth and total standing pasture biomass at the landscape scale.

Note that the model does not use stocking rate data for individual properties. Where stock numbers are significantly higher or lower than typical for a district, model estimates of total standing dry matter may be erroneous.

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