

Northern Territory Pastoral Feed Outlook - April 2020

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 and relative 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.

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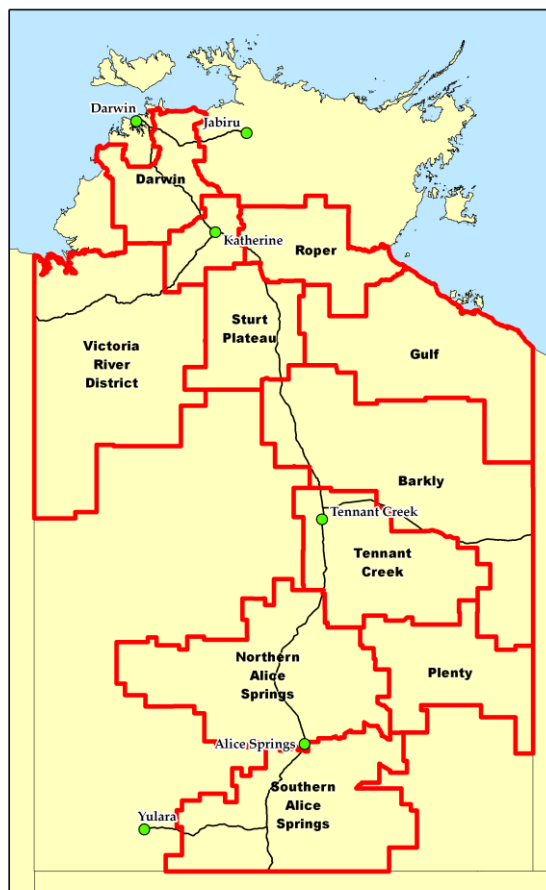
[Barkly District](#)

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[Northern Alice Springs District](#)

[Plenty District](#)

[Southern Alice Springs District](#)

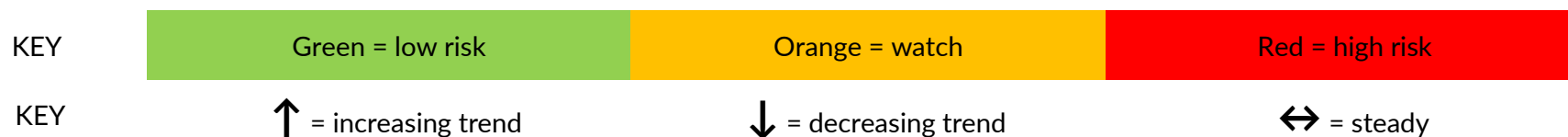


Summary of current situation and trends – all districts – April 2020

As at 1 April 2020, most districts have experienced below-average to extremely low pasture growth for the 2019/20 growing season. Further pasture growth may eventuate in the Alice Springs districts from southerly frontal systems, but grass growth is likely to be constrained by cooler temperatures coming into winter.

Several northern districts have experienced their second consecutive below-average season, including large parts of the Victoria River, Sturt Plateau, Roper, Gulf and Tennant Creek districts. On current trajectories, it appears that the Northern Alice Springs, Plenty and Southern Alice Springs districts will also experience their second consecutive below-average season.

Large parts of the NT have very low levels (200-500 kg/ha) of standing pasture biomass. These include areas in the Victoria River District, Gulf and Plenty districts. Critically low pasture levels (less than 200 kg/ha) are widespread in the Barkly, Tennant Creek and Northern Alice Springs districts. Large areas of the Southern Alice Springs district have less than 100 kg/ha of standing pasture biomass.



| Indicator | Northern Territory Pastoral Districts | | | | | | | | | | | Comments |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------|-----|---------------|-------|------|--------|---------------|------------------------|--------|------------------------|--|
| | Darwin | Katherine | VRD | Sturt Plateau | Roper | Gulf | Barkly | Tennant Creek | Northern Alice Springs | Plenty | Southern Alice Springs | |
| 2019/2020 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

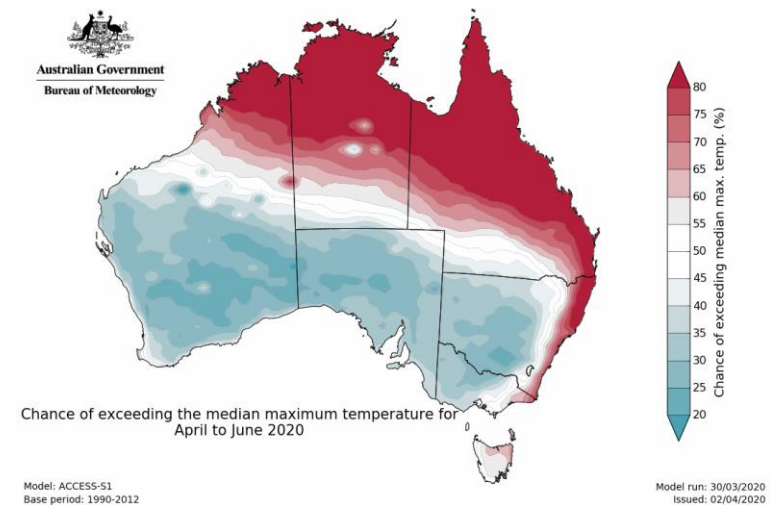
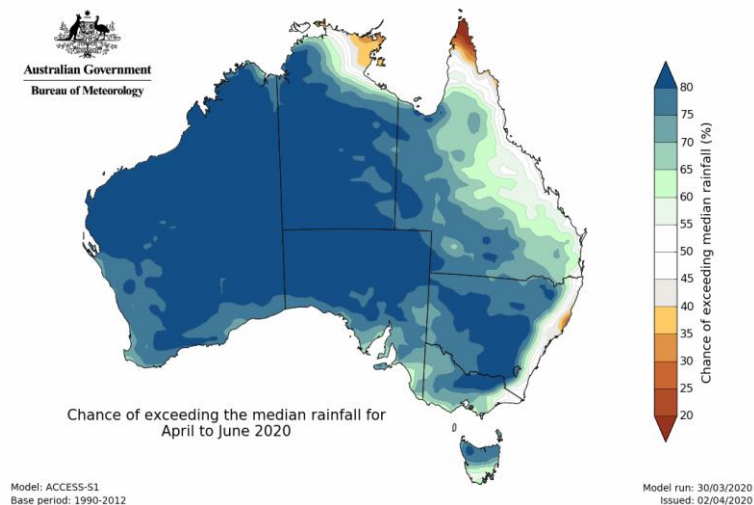
Northern Territory Seasonal Outlook as at April 2020*

Sourced from the Australian Bureau of Meteorology (BOM)

* 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.

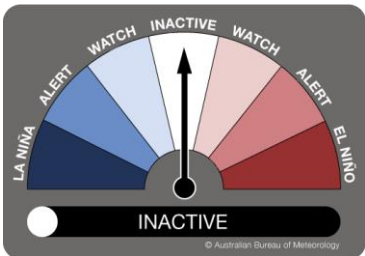
The outlook for April to June 2020 indicates that:

- **Wetter** than average conditions are predicted across the majority of the NT with the exception of Arnhem land, especially in April
- **Warmer** than average nights are likely for the entire NT
- **Warmer** than average days are likely north of Alice Springs



The El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) are currently neutral and are forecast to remain neutral into winter, but the tropical ocean to the west of Australia is forecast to remain warmer-than-average and is likely to be the major influence on our climate over the coming season.

The Bureau of Meteorology predicts that wetter-than-average conditions are expected across much of the NT between April and July, but in reality little rain typically falls in these months, so any rainfall that does fall would result in “wetter-than-average” conditions.

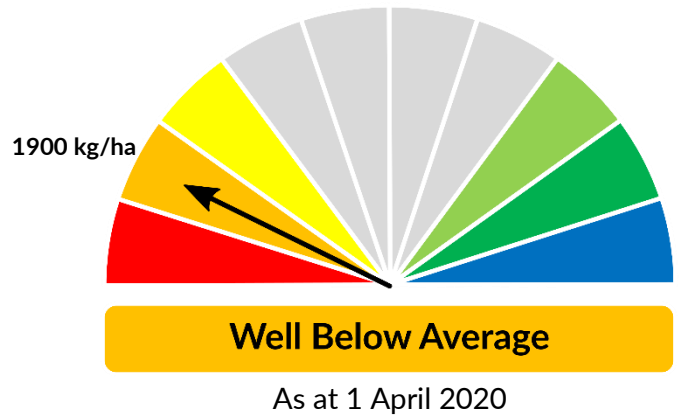
| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Seasonal Indicator</p> | <p>Comments (sourced from the Australian Bureau of Meteorology)</p> |
| <p>El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) Bureau of Meteorology ENSO Wrap-Up</p> <p>Current outlook: Neutral ENSO status: INACTIVE</p>  | <p>The El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) remains neutral</p> <p>The tropical Pacific remains neutral with respect to the ENSO. Atmospheric and oceanic indicators of ENSO including the Southern Oscillation Index (SOI), trade winds, cloudiness near the Date Line, and sea surface and sub-surface temperatures in the tropical Pacific Ocean all continue to persist at levels consistent with neutral ENSO.</p> <p>Six of the eight climate models surveyed by the Bureau indicate that ENSO is likely to stay neutral through the southern hemisphere winter. The remaining two models suggest La Niña may develop during winter.</p> <p>ENSO predictions made during autumn tend to have lower accuracy than predictions made at other times of the year. This means that current ENSO forecasts beyond May should be used with some caution.</p> <p>To see larger versions of these images, go to the SOI and Outlooks tabs at Bureau of Meteorology ENSO Wrap-Up</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div data-bbox="1176 239 1612 550"> <p>30 Day Moving SOI Latest 30 day value = -7.6</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1624 239 2128 566"> <p>Monthly sea surface temperature anomalies for NINO3.4 region</p> </div> </div> |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) Bureau of Meteorology ENSO Wrap-Up</p> <p>Current outlook: Neutral</p> | <p>Neutral IOD</p> <p>The IOD is neutral. Of the six international climate models surveyed, most indicate neutral IOD for the coming months. One model briefly reaches positive levels at the end of autumn, while several tend towards negative levels during the southern hemisphere winter. However, similar to ENSO, accuracy of IOD forecasts beyond autumn is low.</p> <p>IOD events typically have little influence on Australian climate from December to April, meaning the strong dry signal should start to weaken.</p> <p>To see larger versions of these images, go to IOD Time Series and the Indian Ocean tab at Bureau of Meteorology ENSO Wrap-Up</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div data-bbox="1176 774 1612 1085"> <p>IOD Index Time Series Latest weekly value = -0.08</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1624 774 2128 1093"> <p>Monthly sea surface temperature anomalies for IOD region</p> </div> </div> |
|---|---|

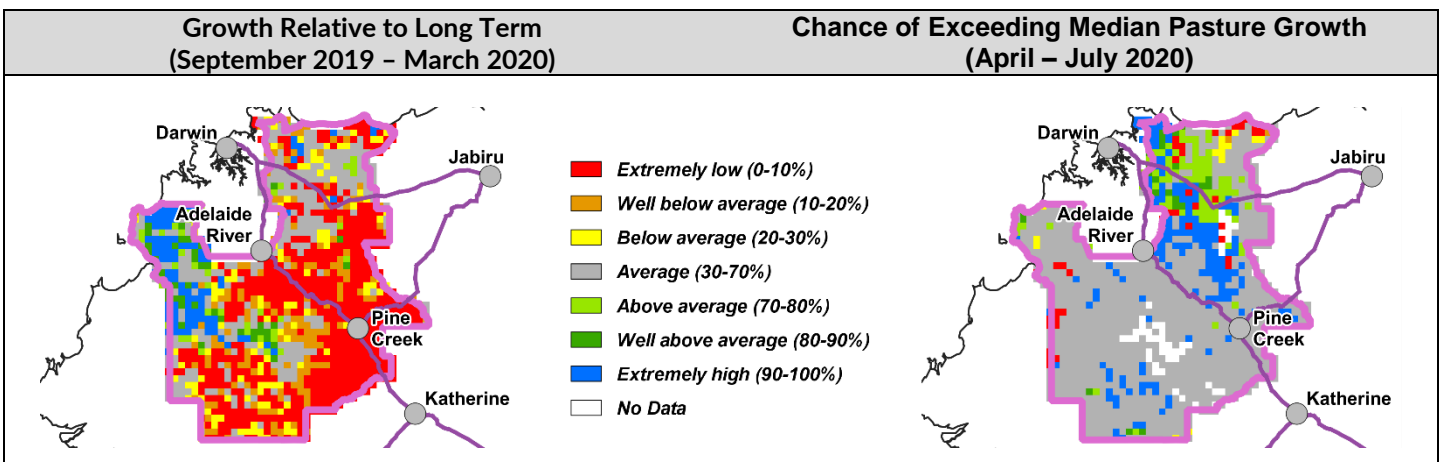
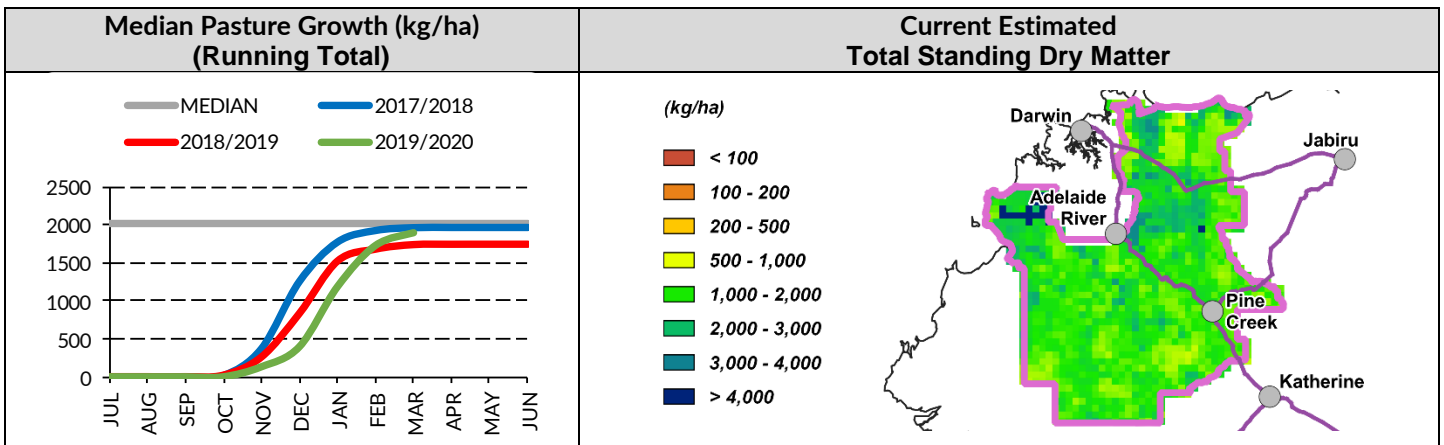
Darwin District

- The 2019/20 pasture growth for the district is well below-average compared to long-term records.
- A late start (about 14-28 days late) and patchy rain has resulted in wide variation in pasture growth depending on location.
- In a typical wet season, pasture growth in the Darwin region tends to be limited by available soil nitrogen rather than soil moisture. This means that the annual variation in growth on upland country is quite low. Whilst growth is well below-average this year, the actual growth on the upland country may only be about 5% below the long-term median amount.
- 31% of the district has burnt since 1 July 2019.

2019/20 Pasture Growth



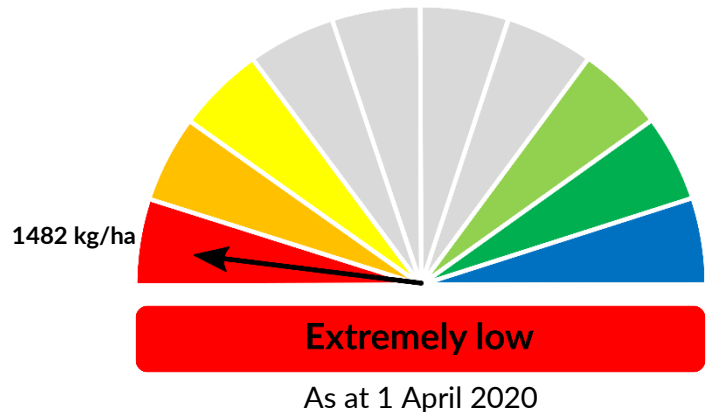
| As at 1 April 2020 | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| (% of district) | <1,000kg/ha | 1,000 - 2,000kg/ha | 2,000 - 3,000kg/ha | >3,000kg/ha |
| 2019/20 Pasture Growth | 0% | 60% | 36% | 4% |
| Total Standing Dry Matter | 0% | 50% | 42% | 8% |



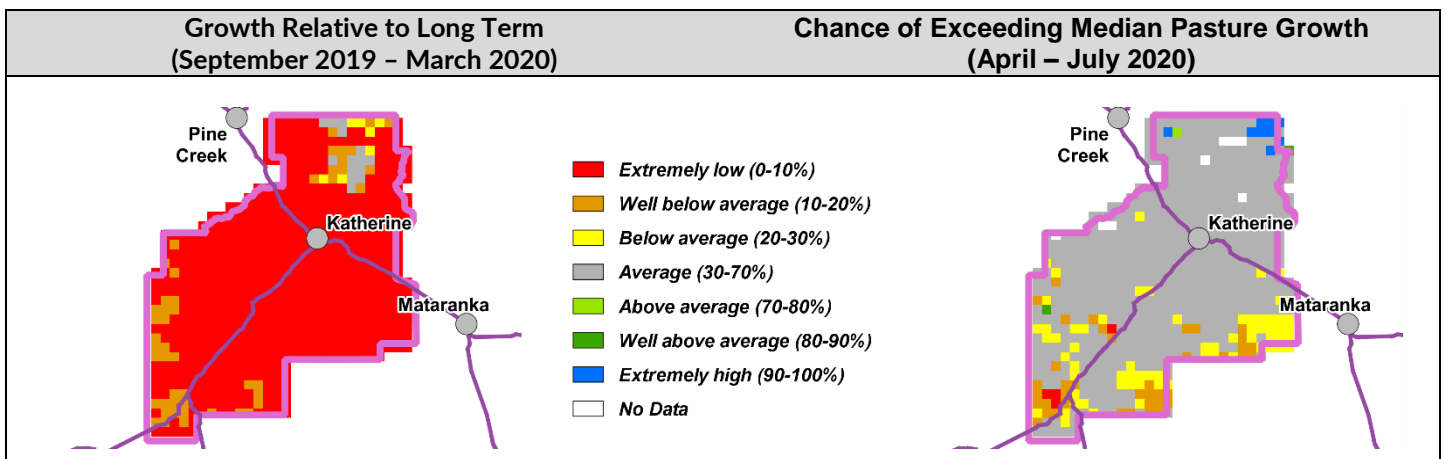
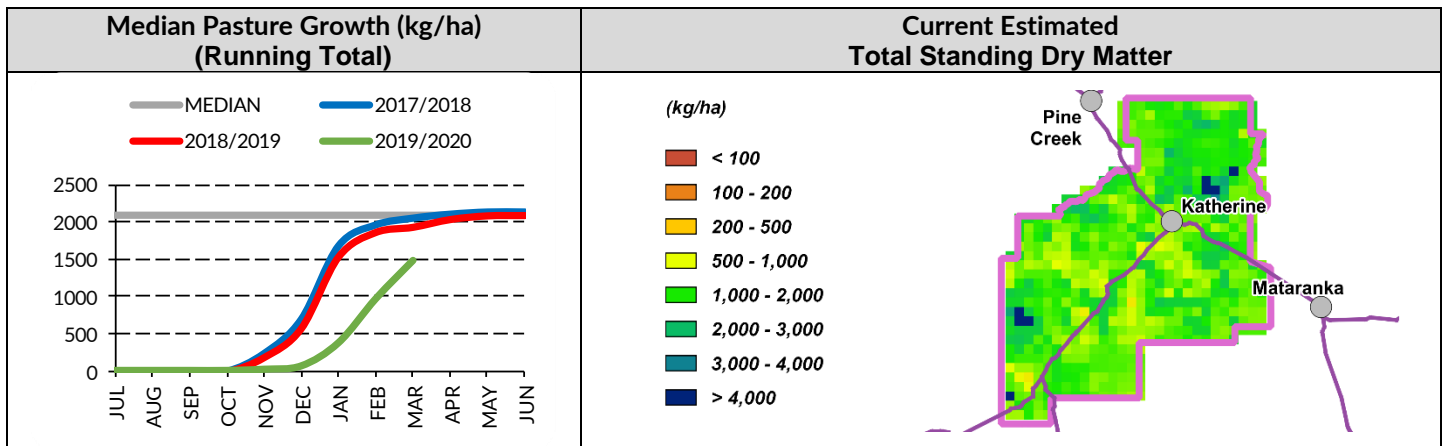
Katherine District

- The 2019/20 pasture growth for the district as a whole was patchy and extremely low (a 1 in 40 year event).
- Having said that, the district pasture growth is only 29% lower than the long-term median which highlights that pasture growth tends to be limited by available soil nitrogen rather than soil moisture in this region.
- The start to the wet season was late across the entire district but varied considerably from 7-14 days late (in the west) to 28-42 days late (in the south). The shorter growing season has contributed to the low pasture growth.
- 14% of the district has burnt since 1 July 2019.

2019/20 Pasture Growth



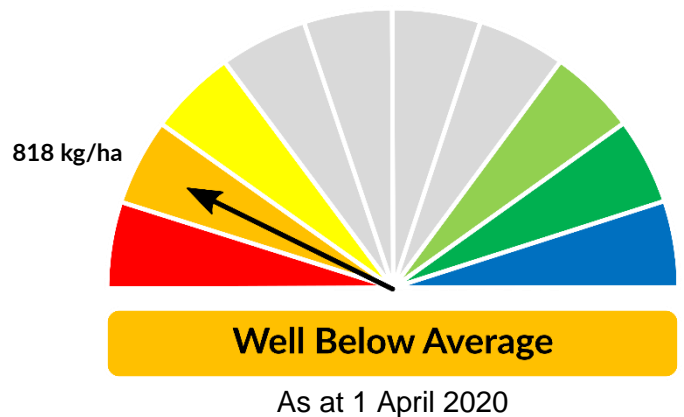
| As at 1 April 2020 | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| (% of district) | <1,000kg/ha | 1,000 - 2,000kg/ha | 2,000 - 3,000kg/ha | >3,000kg/ha |
| 2019/20 Pasture Growth | 11% | 74% | 15% | 0% |
| Total Standing Dry Matter | 1% | 66% | 30% | 3% |



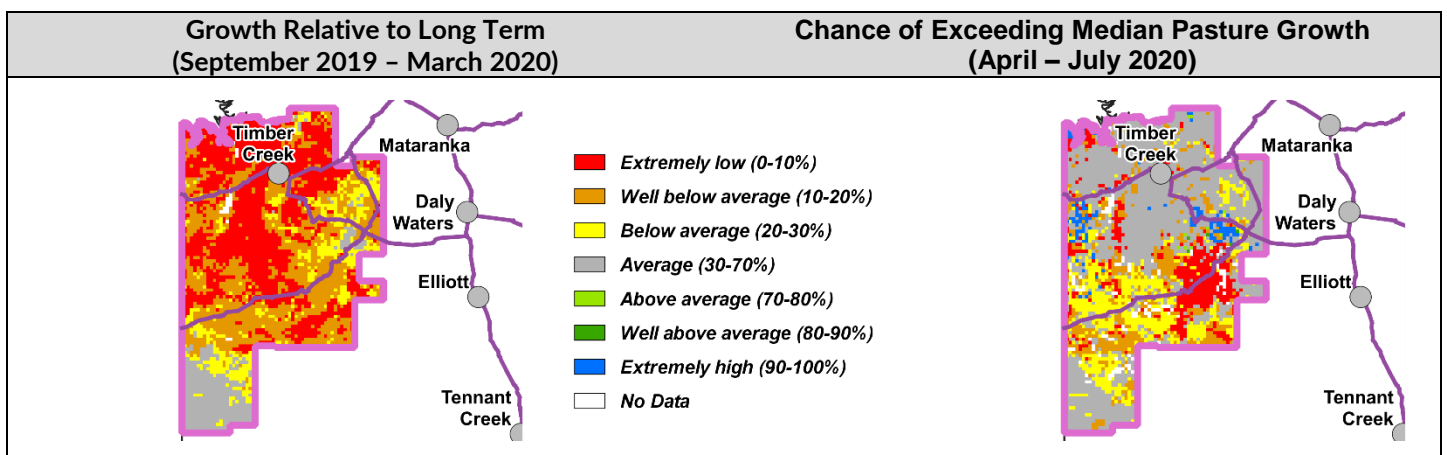
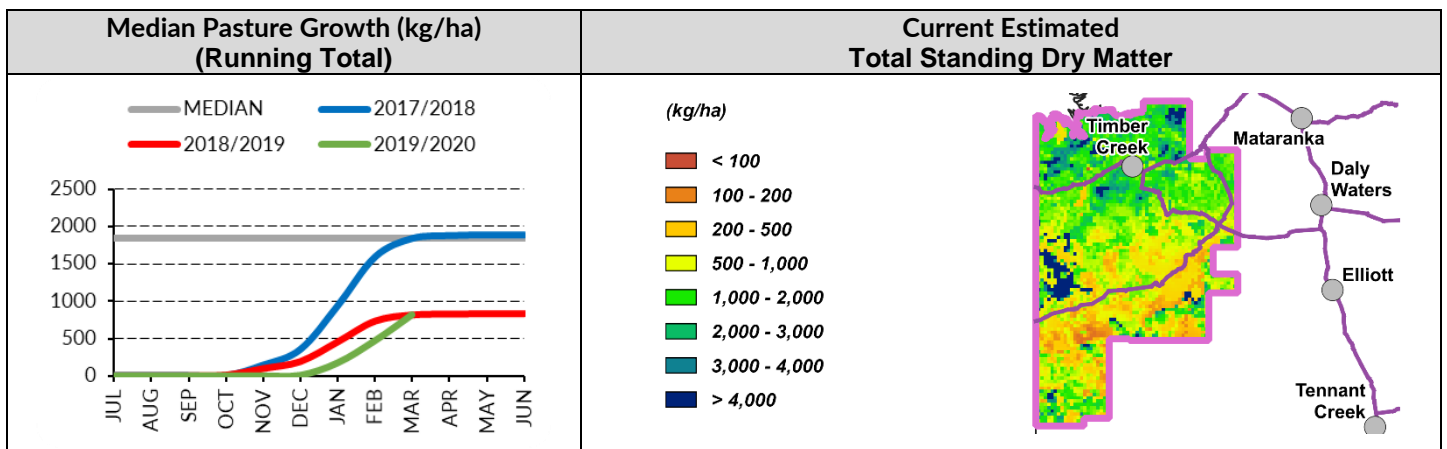
Victoria River District

- The 2019/20 pasture growth for the district is patchy and well below-average (a 1 in 10 to 1 in 5 year event). The district pasture growth is 56% lower than the long-term median.
- The start to the wet season varied considerably, ranging from 1-7 days late (in the NW) to as much as 42-70 days late (in the SE). The shorter growing season has contributed to low pasture growth in some areas.
- Last season the pasture growth for the district was also extremely low (in the lowest 6% of years on record).
- Areas in the southern half of the district are showing low levels of pasture biomass (<500 kg/ha).
- 9% of the district has burnt since 1 July 2019.

2019/20 Pasture Growth

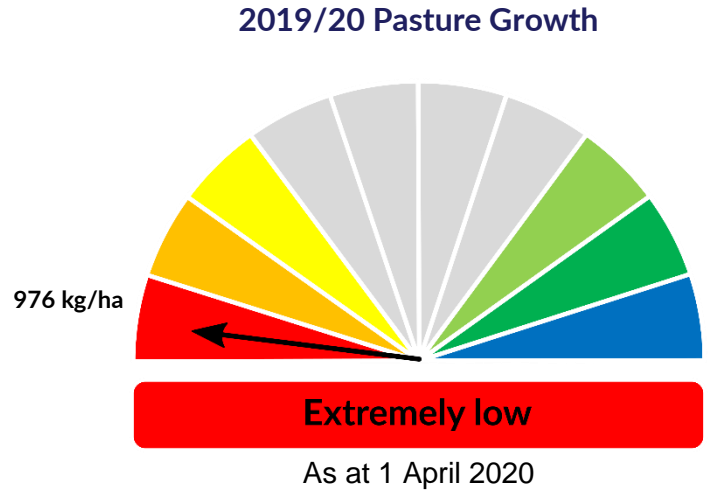


| As at 1 April 2020 | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| (% of district) | <1,000kg/ha | 1,000 - 2,000kg/ha | 2,000 - 3,000kg/ha | >3,000kg/ha |
| 2019/20 Pasture Growth | 58% | 33% | 9% | <1% |
| Total Standing Dry Matter | 31% | 41% | 18% | 10% |

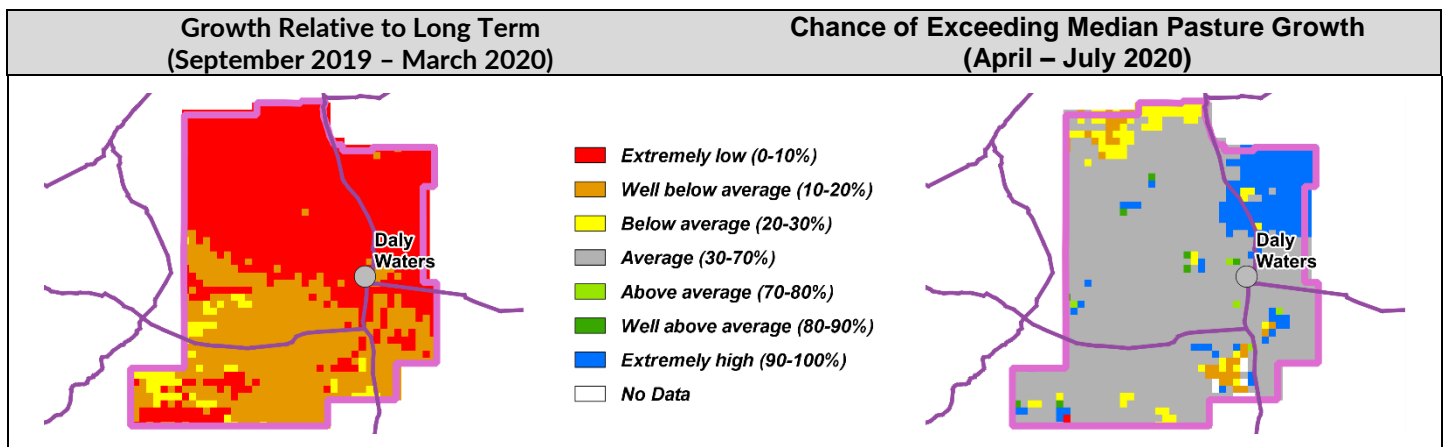
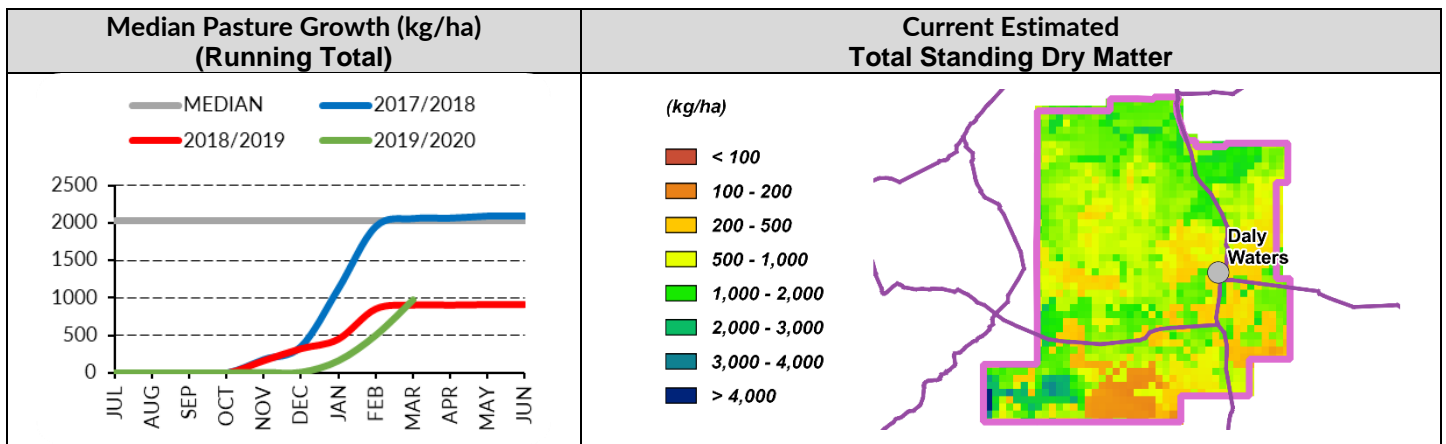


Sturt Plateau District

- The 2019/20 pasture growth for the district is extremely low (a 1 in 10 year event). The district pasture growth is 52% lower than the long-term median.
- The start to the wet season was late across the entire district but varied between 28-42 days late (in the west) to as much as 42-70 days late (in the east). The shorter growing season has contributed to the low pasture growth.
- The 2018/19 wet season pasture growth was also extremely low (lowest 3% of years on record).
- Areas in the southern half of the district are showing low levels of pasture biomass (<500 kg/ha), and one area in the far south is showing critically low levels (<200 kg/ha).



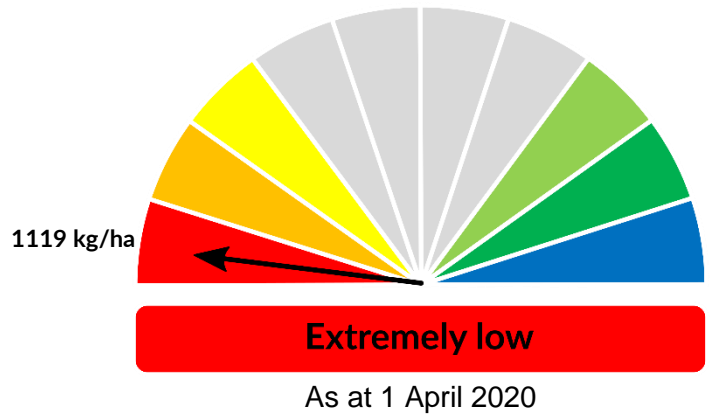
| As at 1 April 2020 | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| (% of district) | <1,000kg/ha | 1,000 - 2,000kg/ha | 2,000 - 3,000kg/ha | >3,000kg/ha |
| 2019/20 Pasture Growth | 52% | 46% | 2% | 0% |
| Total Standing Dry Matter | 32% | 59% | 8% | 1% |



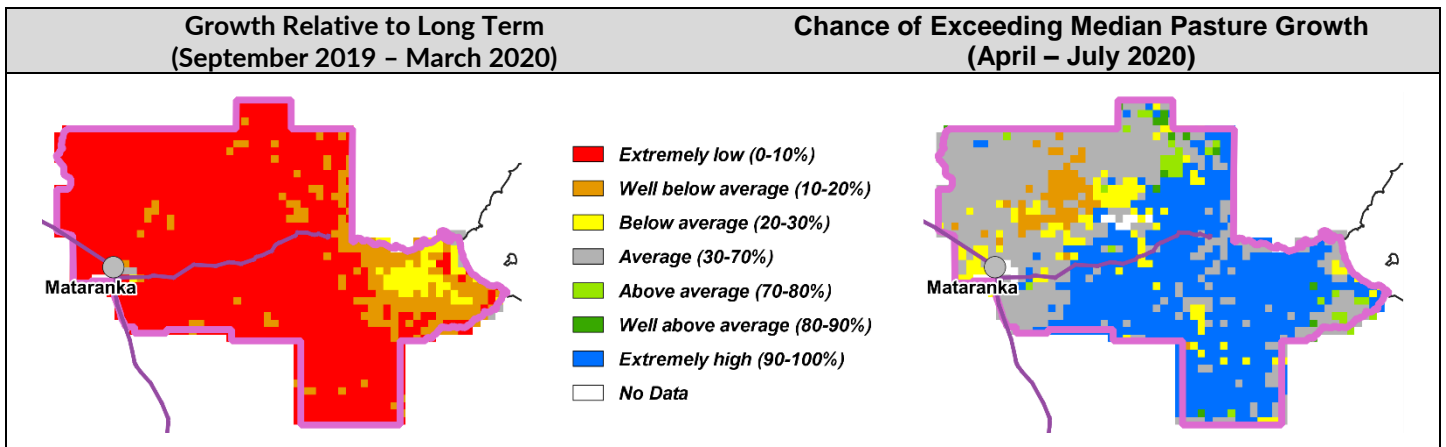
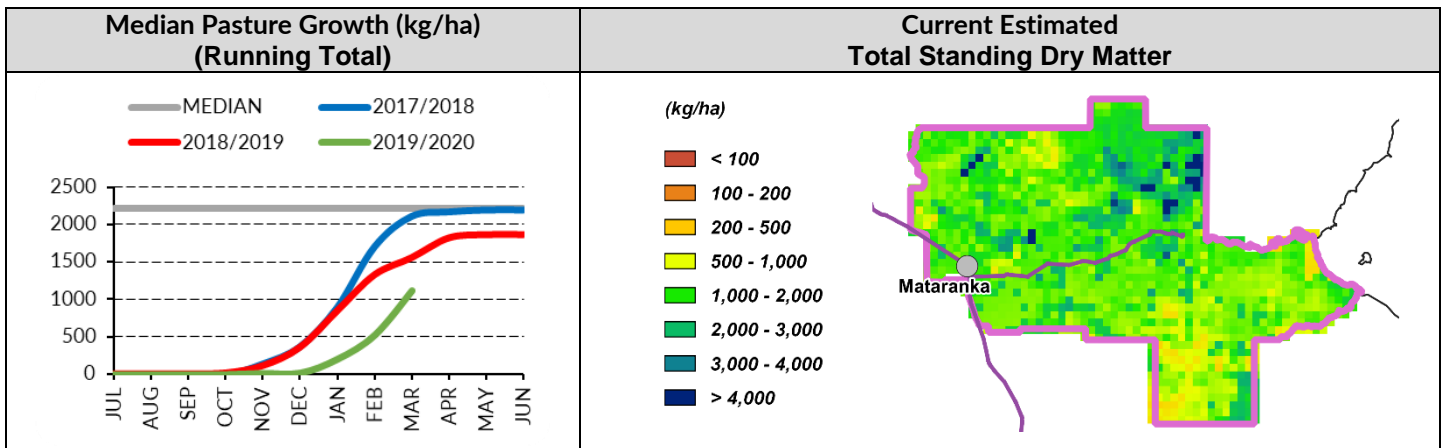
Roper District

- The 2019/20 pasture growth for the district is extremely low (a 1 in 20 year event). The district pasture growth is 49% lower than the long-term median.
- With the exception of a small area in the east, the entire district has experienced a late start to the wet season. The start varied considerably between 28-42 days late (in the north) to as much as 42-70 days late (in the south). The shorter growing season has contributed to the low pasture growth.
- The 2018/19 pasture growth for the district as a whole was also below-average (lowest 21% of years on record). However, growth was very variable across the district last year.
- 12% of the district has burnt since 1 July 2019.

2019/20 Pasture Growth

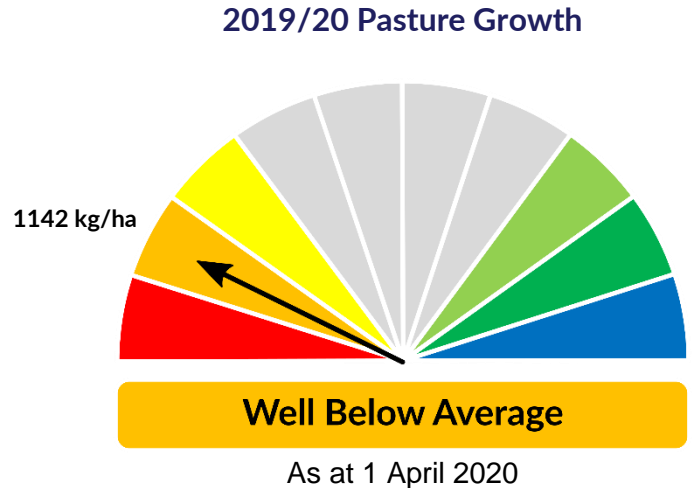


| As at 1 April 2020 | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| (% of district) | <1,000kg/ha | 1,000 - 2,000kg/ha | 2,000 - 3,000kg/ha | >3,000kg/ha |
| 2019/20 Pasture Growth | 36% | 54% | 9% | 1% |
| Total Standing Dry Matter | 5% | 64% | 23% | 8% |

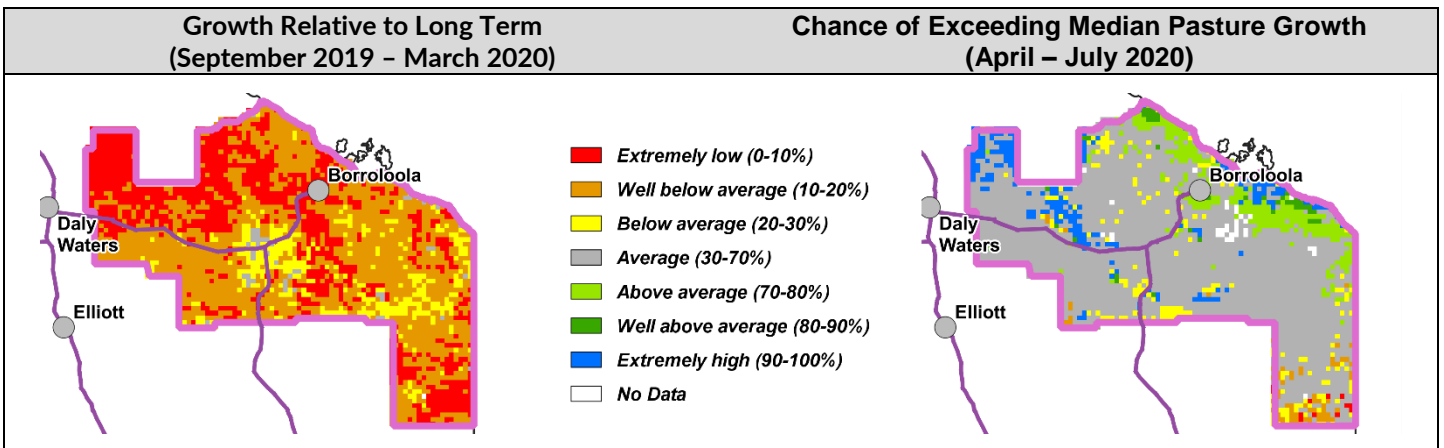
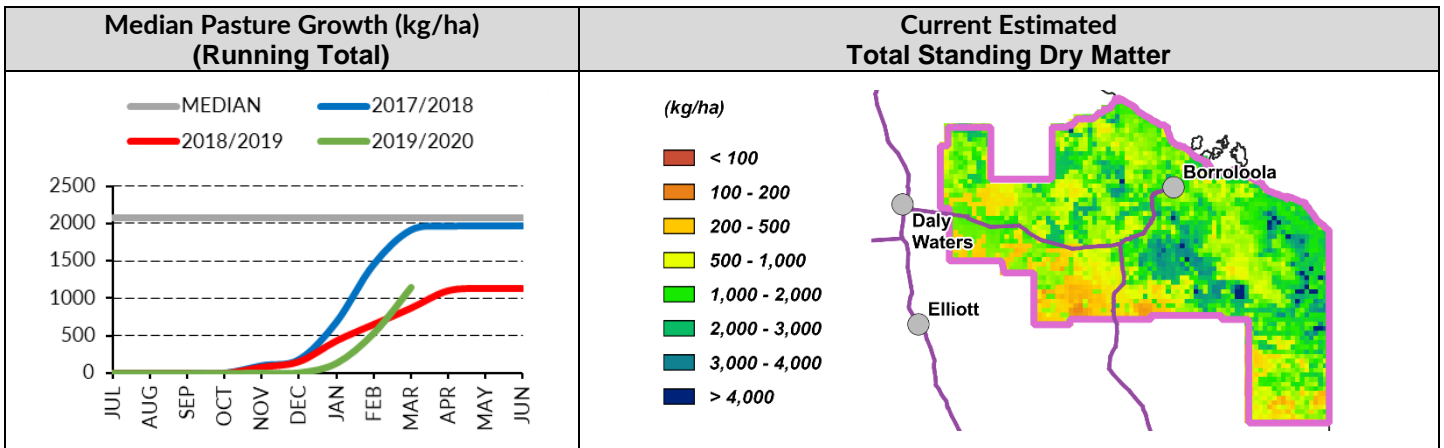


Gulf District

- The 2019/20 pasture growth for the district is well below-average (a 1 in 10 to 1 in 5 year event). The district pasture growth is 45% lower than the long-term median.
- The entire district experienced a late start to the wet season, ranging from 21-28 days late (in the south), to 42-70 days late (in the NW). The shorter growing season has contributed to the low pasture growth.
- 2018/19 pasture growth was also extremely low (lowest 6% of years on record). A narrow strip along the coast was the exception, with average growth last year.
- Western and southern parts of the district are showing low levels of pasture biomass (<500 kg/ha).
- 9% of the district has burnt since 1 July 2019.

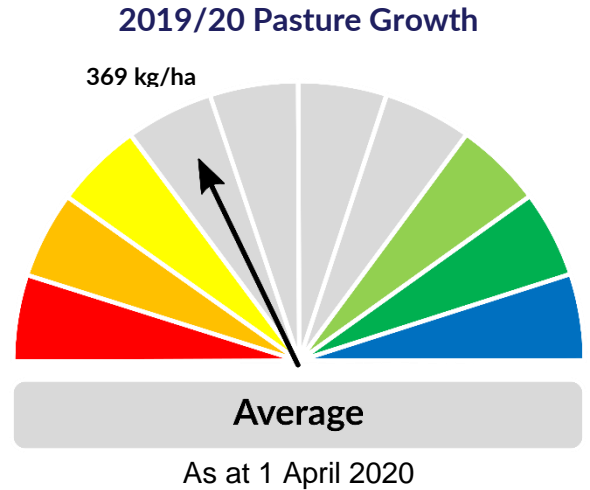


| As at 1 April 2020 | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| (% of district) | <1,000kg/ha | 1,000 - 2,000kg/ha | 2,000 - 3,000kg/ha | >3,000kg/ha |
| 2019/20 Pasture Growth | 41% | 48% | 11% | <1% |
| Total Standing Dry Matter | 19% | 50% | 22% | 9% |

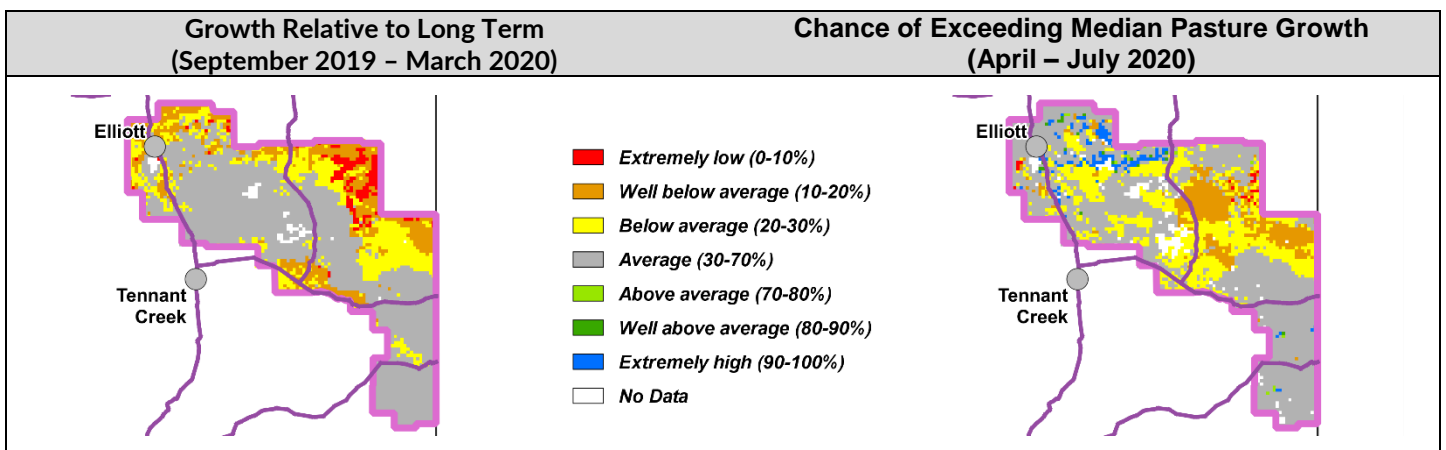
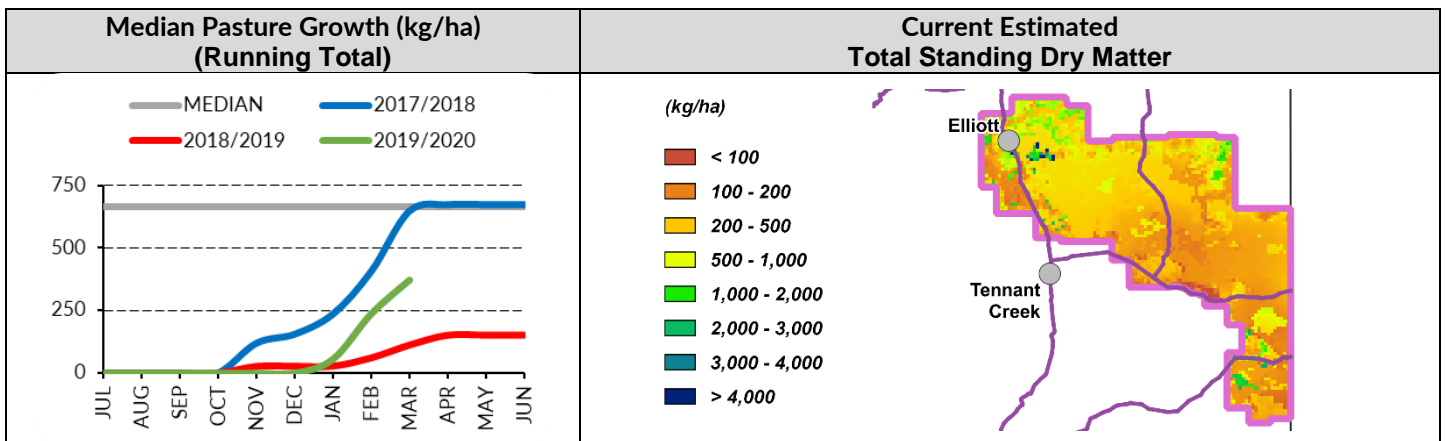


Barkly District

- The 2019/20 pasture growth for the district is average, with the exception of parts of the far north and NE, which are showing below-average pasture growth.
- The entire district experienced a late start to the wet season, but varied from 21-28 days late (in the mid-north) to as much as 42-70 days late (in the NW, centre and SE). The shorter growing season has contributed to low pasture growth in these areas.
- 2018/19 pasture growth for the district as a whole was extremely low (lowest 3% of years on record).
- The majority of the district is still showing low levels of pasture biomass (<500 kg/ha).



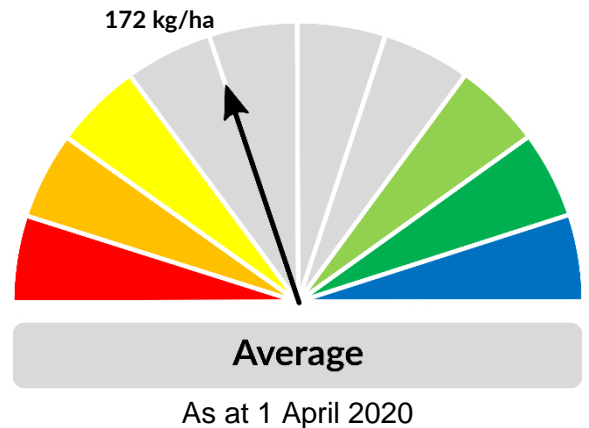
| As at 1 April 2020 | | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------|----------------|------------------|-------------|
| (% of district) | <250kg/ha | 250 - 500kg/ha | 500 - 1,000kg/ha | >1,000kg/ha |
| 2019/20 Pasture Growth | 27% | 42% | 26% | 5% |
| Total Standing Dry Matter | 11% | 43% | 35% | 11% |



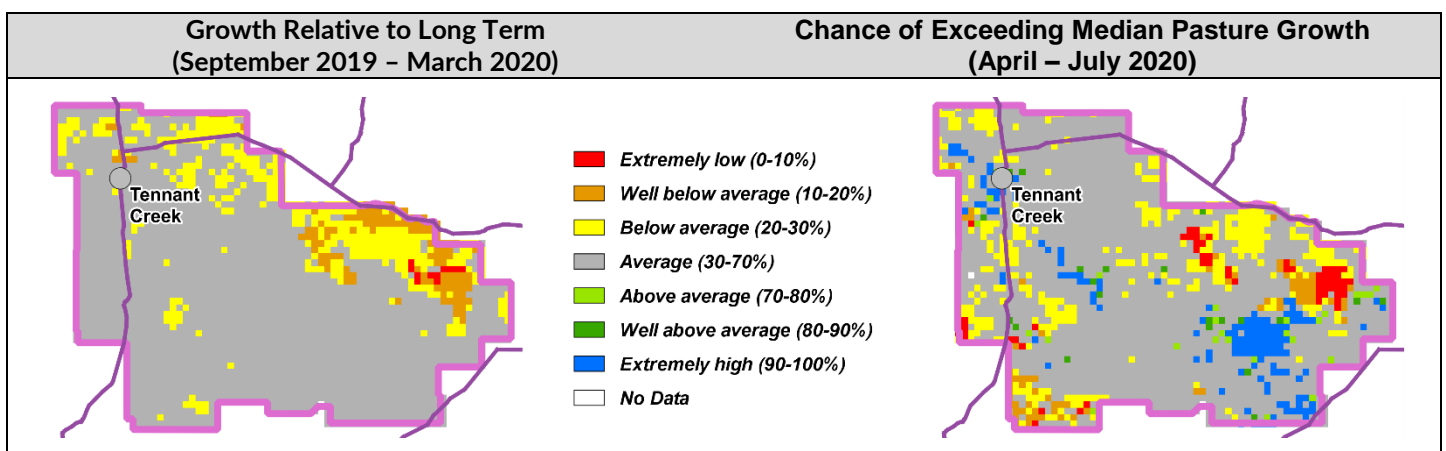
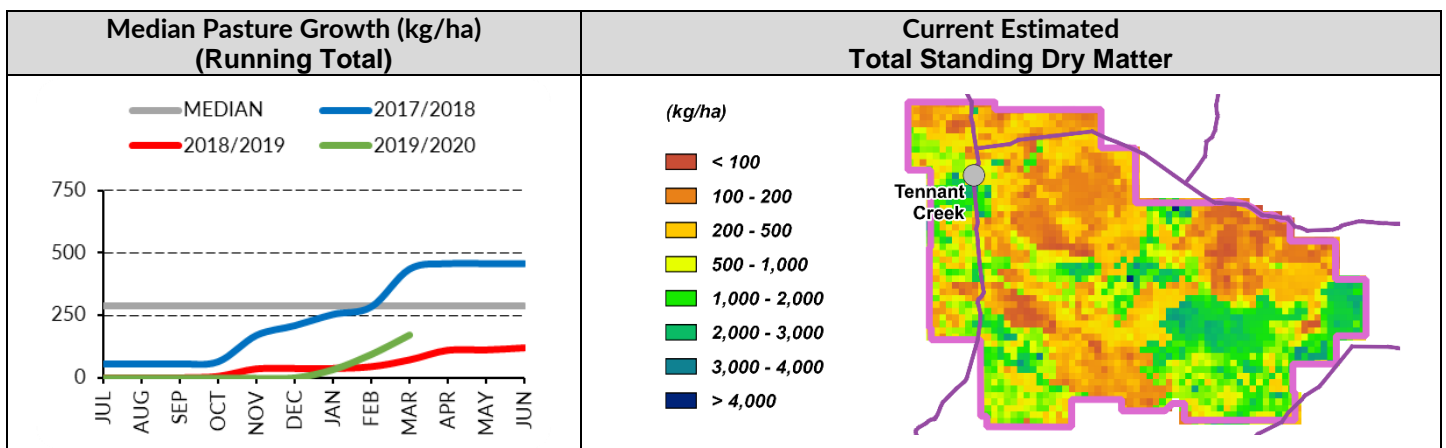
Tennant Creek District

- The 2019/20 pasture growth for the district is average, with the exception of parts of the north and NE, which are showing below-average pasture growth. The latter equates to pasture growth about 40% lower than the long-term median.
- The entire region experienced a late start to the wet season, but timing varied considerably (between 21 and 70 days late).
- Large parts of the district are showing extremely low levels of pasture biomass (<200 kg/ha).
- 2% of the district has burnt since 1 July 2019.

2019/20 Pasture Growth (September 2019 – April 2020)



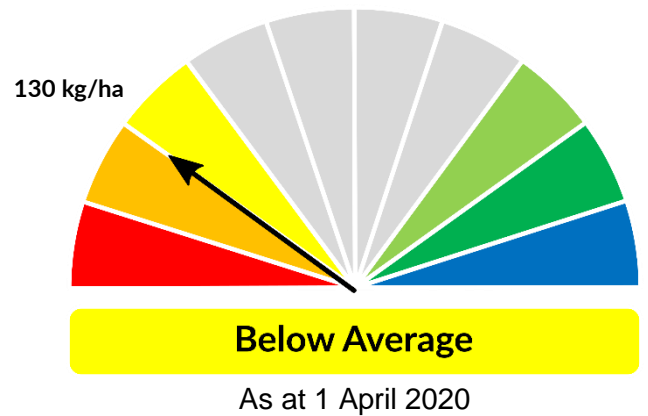
| As at 1 April 2020 | | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------|----------------|------------------|-------------|
| (% of district) | <250kg/ha | 250 - 500kg/ha | 500 - 1,000kg/ha | >1,000kg/ha |
| 2019/20 Pasture Growth | 76% | 16% | 7% | 1% |
| Total Standing Dry Matter | 17% | 24% | 22% | 37% |



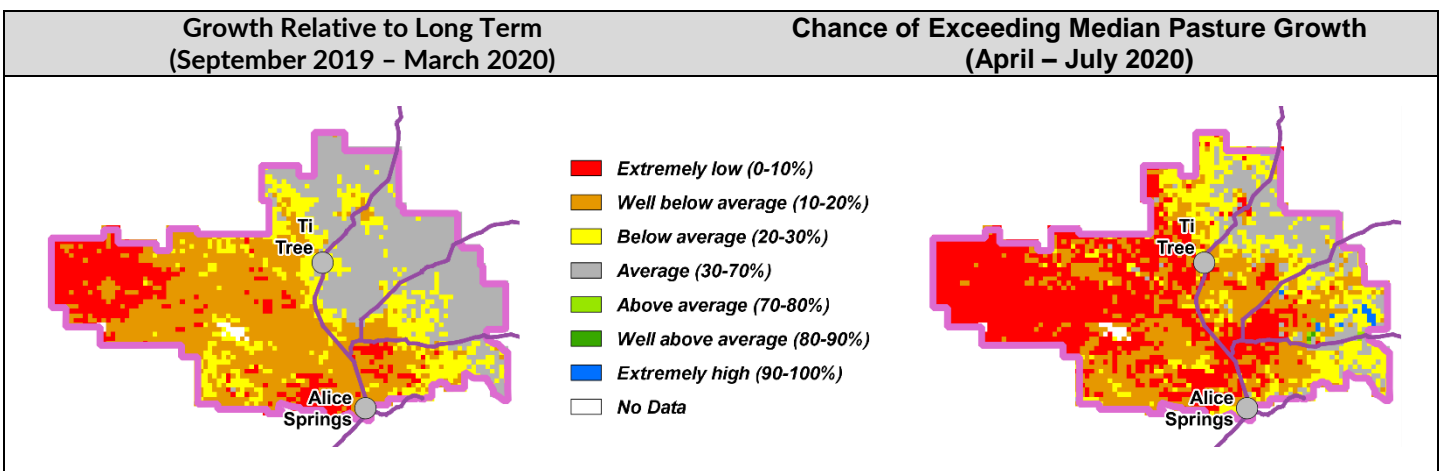
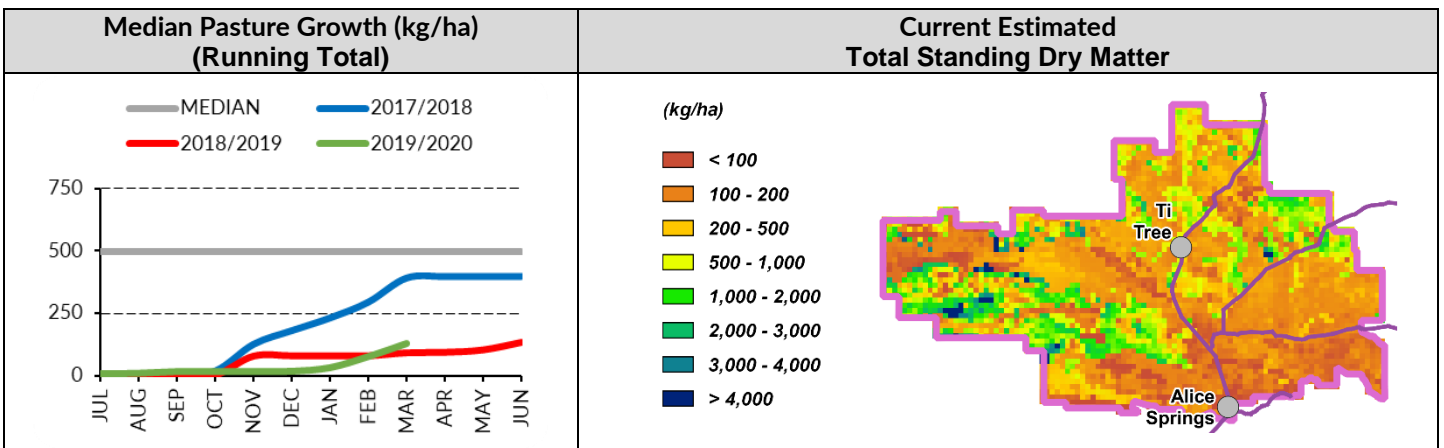
Northern Alice Springs District

- The 2019/20 pasture growth for the district as a whole is below-average but varies considerably from extremely low growth in the west (a 1 in 20 year event), to average in the east. The district pasture growth as a whole is 74% lower than the long-term median.
- The 2018/19 pasture growth for the district as a whole was also extremely low (in the lowest 6% of years on record).
- Large areas of the district are now showing extremely low levels of pasture biomass (<200 kg/ha).

2019/20 Pasture Growth
(September 2019 – April 2020)



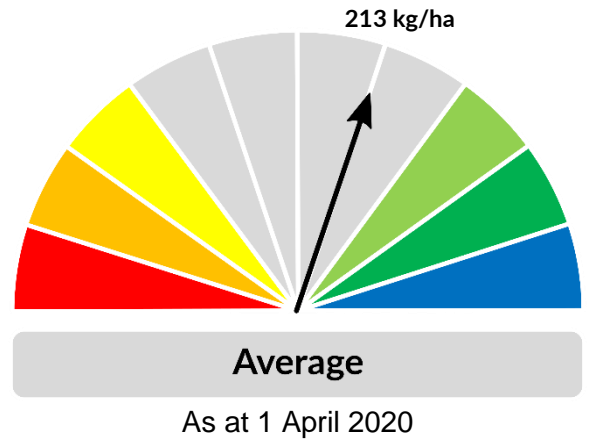
| As at 1 April 2020 | | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------|----------------|------------------|-------------|
| (% of district) | <250kg/ha | 250 - 500kg/ha | 500 - 1,000kg/ha | >1,000kg/ha |
| 2019/20 Pasture Growth | 91% | 9% | <1% | 0% |
| Total Standing Dry Matter | 32% | 34% | 12% | 22% |



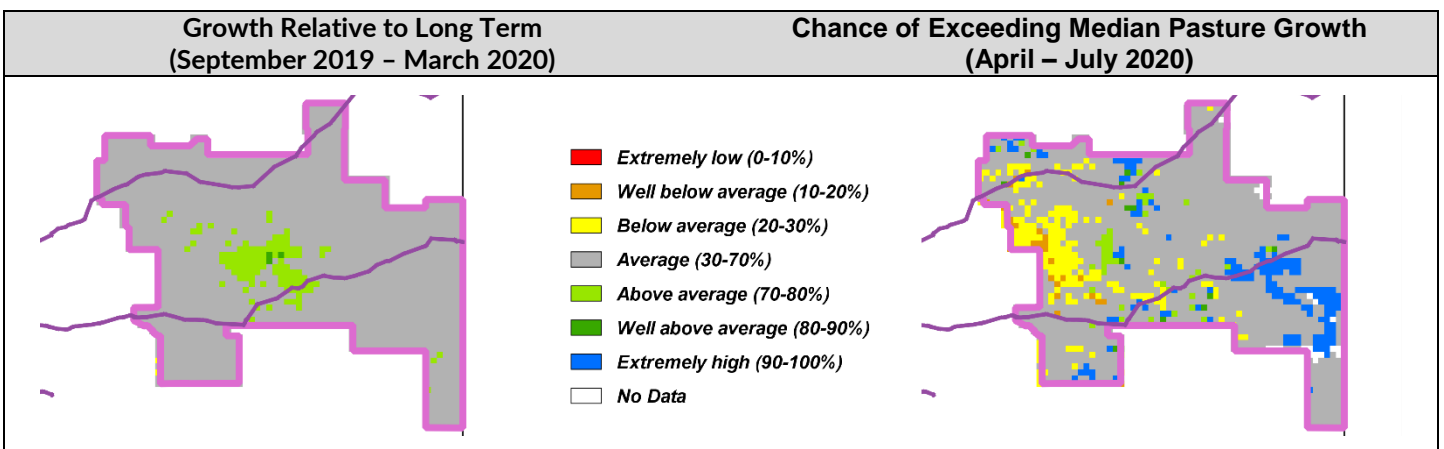
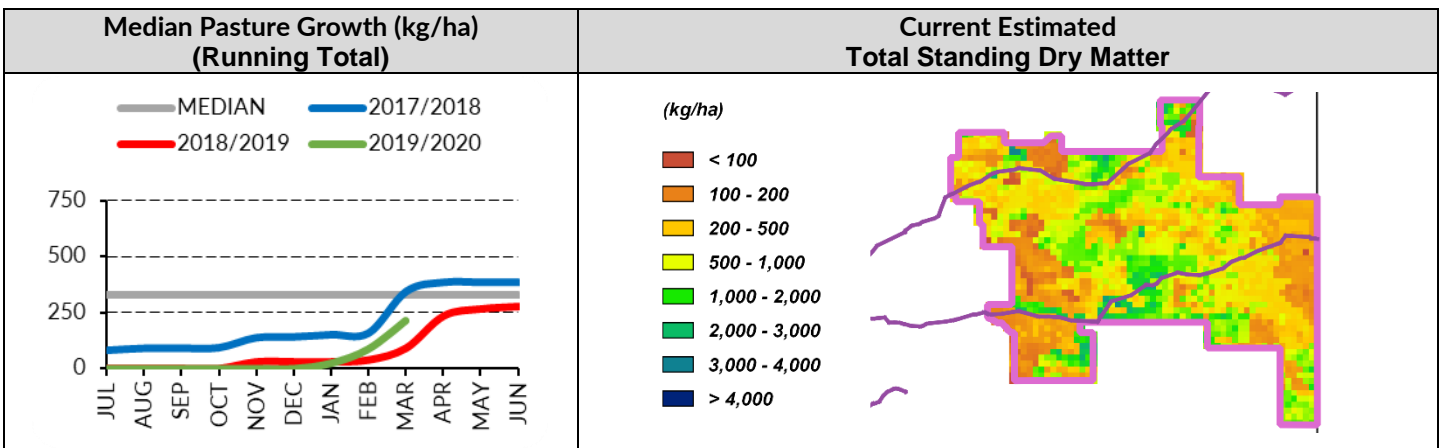
Plenty District

- The 2019/20 pasture growth for the district as a whole is average. A small area in the middle of the district is showing above-average pasture growth.
- The 2018/19 pasture growth for the district was also average. This was largely due to rain received from ex-cyclone Trevor in southern and eastern parts.
- Areas in the far western and far eastern parts of the district are showing extremely low pasture biomass (<200 kg/ha).

2019/20 Pasture Growth (September 2019 – April 2020)



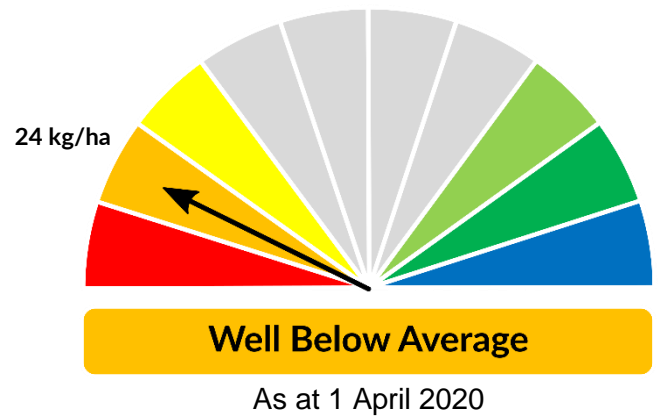
| As at 1 April 2020 | | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------|----------------|------------------|-------------|
| (% of district) | <250kg/ha | 250 - 500kg/ha | 500 - 1,000kg/ha | >1,000kg/ha |
| 2019/20 Pasture Growth | 57% | 28% | 12% | 3% |
| Total Standing Dry Matter | 9% | 25% | 31% | 35% |



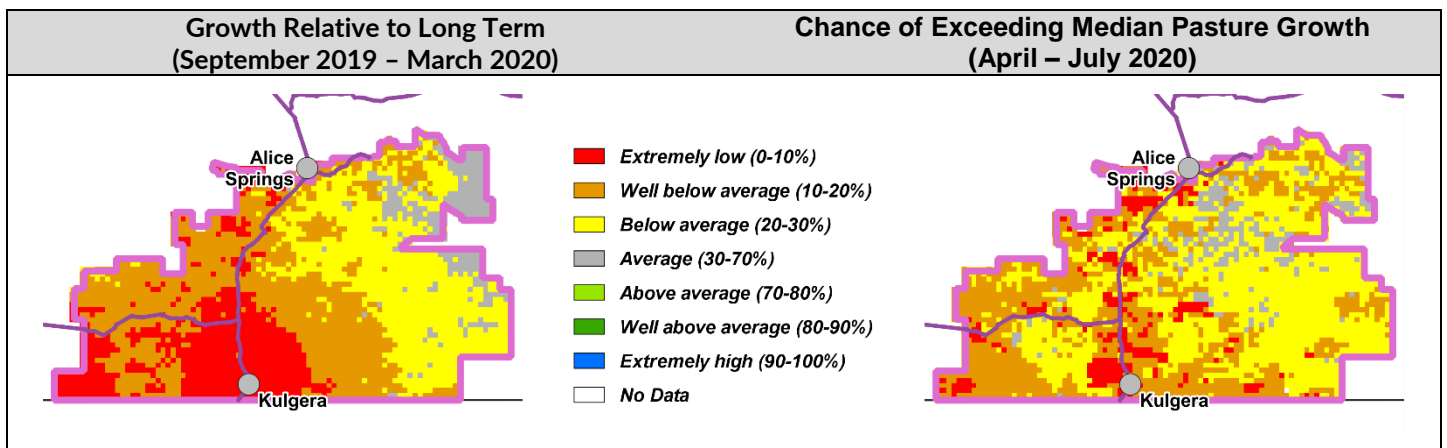
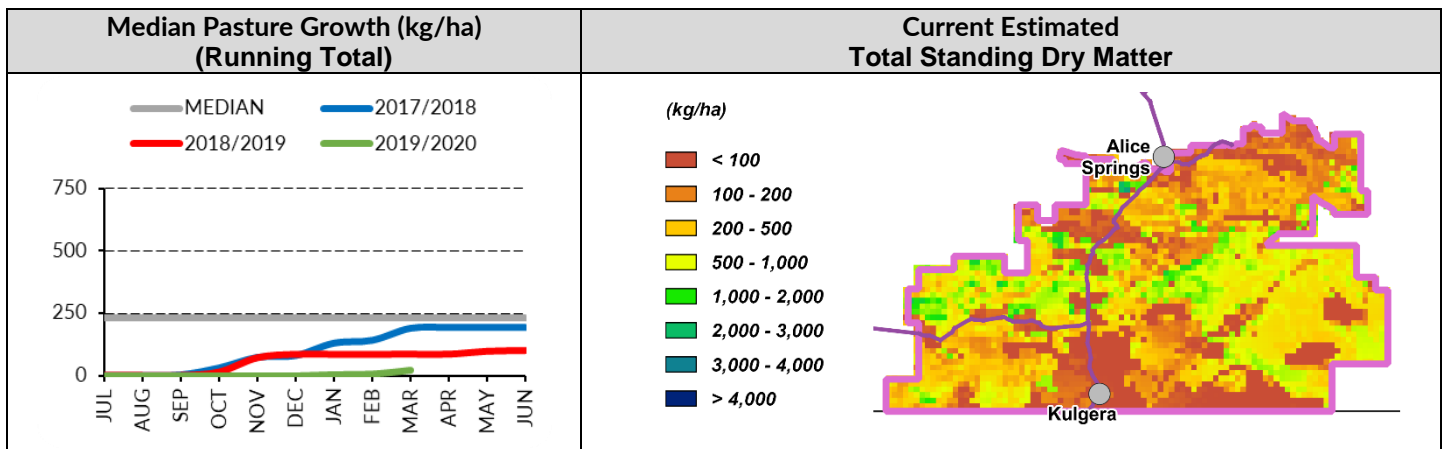
Southern Alice Springs District

- The 2019/20 pasture growth for the district is well below-average (a 1 in 10 to 1 in 5 year event). Pasture growth is about 90% lower than the long-term median. The majority of the district has experienced minimal pasture growth this financial year.
- The 2018/19 pasture growth for the district as a whole was also below-average (lowest 29% of years on record). However, growth was patchy; much of the western half of the district experienced average pasture growth, whilst above-average growth was experienced in the SW.
- Large areas of the district are now showing extremely low levels of pasture biomass (<200 kg/ha), with some areas at critically low levels (<100 kg/ha).

2019/20 Pasture Growth
(September 2019 – April 2020)



| As at 1 April 2020 | | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------|----------------|------------------|-------------|
| (% of district) | <250kg/ha | 250 - 500kg/ha | 500 - 1,000kg/ha | >1,000kg/ha |
| 2019/20 Pasture Growth | 99% | 1% | 0% | 0% |
| Total Standing Dry Matter | 34% | 17% | 31% | 18% |



Pasture information

The pasture and fire 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.

Disclaimer

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