

Northern Territory Pastoral Feed Outlook December 2018

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.

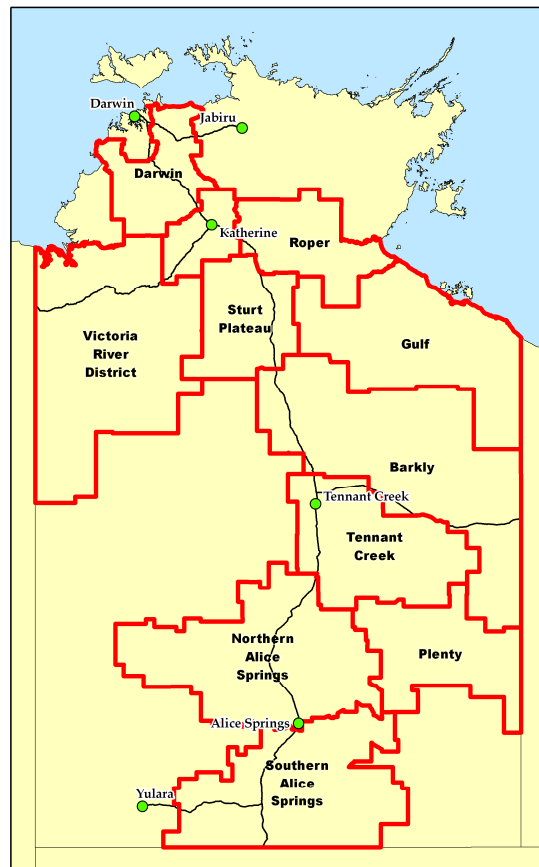
You can see the entire document and all districts by continuing to scroll through this file. If you are interested in selected sections, you can click on the links below.

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

[Northern Territory Seasonal Outlook – as at December 2018](#)

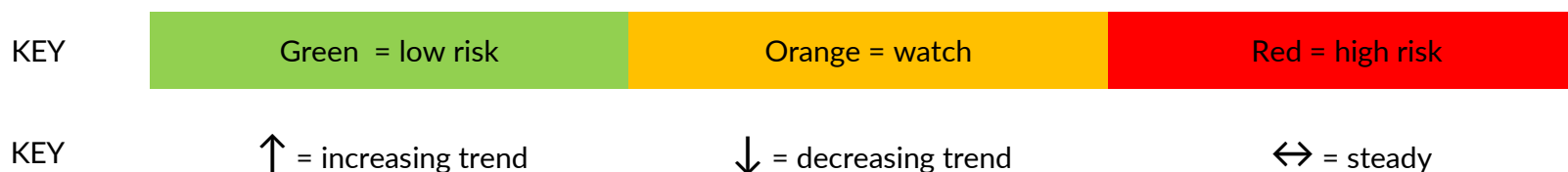
Individual District Summaries:

- [Darwin District](#)
- [Katherine District](#)
- [Victoria River District](#)
- [Sturt Plateau District](#)
- [Roper District](#)
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Summary of current situation & trends - all districts – December 2018

The 2018/19 season has commenced with patchy rain across much of the Northern Territory, resulting in pasture growth in many areas. The resulting soil moisture is likely to lead to further pasture growth in the next three months, however the BOM seasonal forecast suggests there is a low chance of exceeding average rainfall in the coming months. A late onset to the northern wet season is likely. Pasture growth in 2017/18 was close to the long-term median across the majority of the NT. However, this pasture growth was considerably lower than that experienced in 2016/17 for the VRD, Barkly, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs regions. Therefore, in regions where stock numbers have increased with the generally better-than-average seasons in the past couple of decades (e.g. VRD and Barkly), there is the potential for forage shortages if stock numbers are not adjusted to reflect the more typical growth conditions experienced in the past year. The far south-eastern part of the Barkly district has experienced low to extremely low pasture growth over the past 24 months (lowest 30% of years on record) and has very low standing dry matter levels.



Indicator	Northern Territory Pastoral Districts											Comments
	Darwin	Katherine	VRD	Sturt Plateau	Roper	Gulf	Barkly	Tennant Creek	Northern Alice Springs	Plenty	Southern Alice Springs	
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 December 2018*

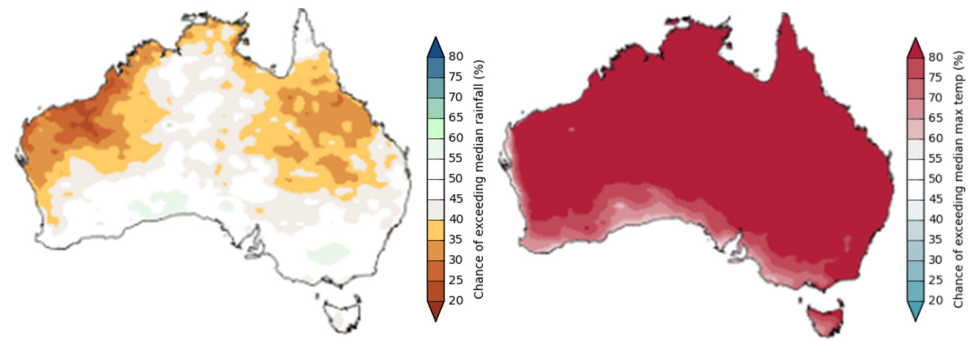
Sourced from the Australian Bureau of Meteorology

The outlook for December 2018 to February 2019 indicates that:

- **Average** to **Drier** than average conditions are generally expected across the NT
- **Drier** than average conditions are more than likely across the Top End
- **Wetter** than average conditions are more likely for the southern NT in December
- **Warmer** than average days and nights are more likely across the entire NT.

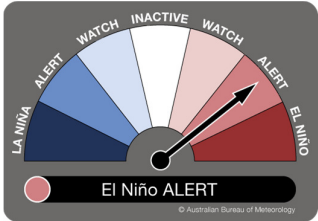
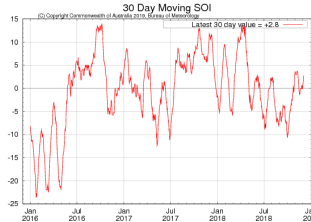
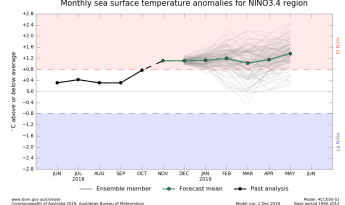
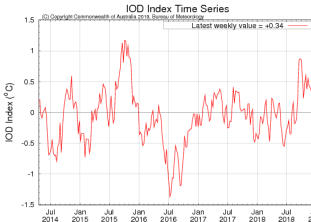
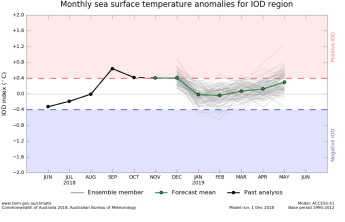
*This seasonal outlook was correct at the time of publication. For the most up-to-date seasonal outlook, please go to <http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/outlooks/>

NT Pastoral Feed Outlook – December 2018



Chance of exceeding the median rainfall
October to December 2018

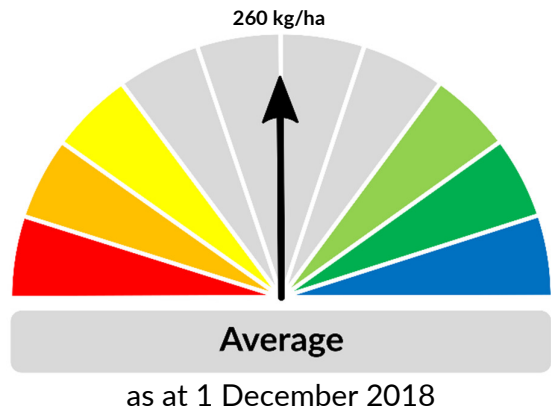
Chance of exceeding the median max. temp.
October to December 2018

Seasonal Indicators	Comments (sourced from the Australian Bureau of Meteorology)		
<p>El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/enso/</p> <p>Current outlook: Neutral</p> <p>ENSO status: Alert</p> 	<p>El Niño–Southern Oscillation neutral, despite the tropical Pacific Ocean temperature exceeding El Niño levels.</p> <p>Sea surface temperatures in the tropical Pacific Ocean have now exceeded El Niño thresholds for more than a month. However, atmospheric indicators—such as trade winds, cloud patterns and the Southern Oscillation Index (SOI)—have not reached El Niño levels. This indicates that the tropical ocean and atmosphere are not reinforcing each other and remain 'uncoupled'. This coupling is required to establish and sustain any ENSO event, and is what drives widespread Australian and global impacts.</p> <p>El Niño effects in Australia over summer typically include higher fire risk, greater chance of heatwaves, and fewer tropical cyclones.</p>		
<p>Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/enso/#tabs=Indian-Ocean</p> <p>Current outlook: Positive</p>	<p>Positive IOD event is weakening</p> <p>The positive IOD event which began in early September has weakened, with the most recent value just below positive thresholds. It is likely that the positive IOD is nearing its end—consistent with model outlooks and the IOD's natural cycle. The IOD typically has little influence on Australian climate from December to April.</p>		

Darwin District

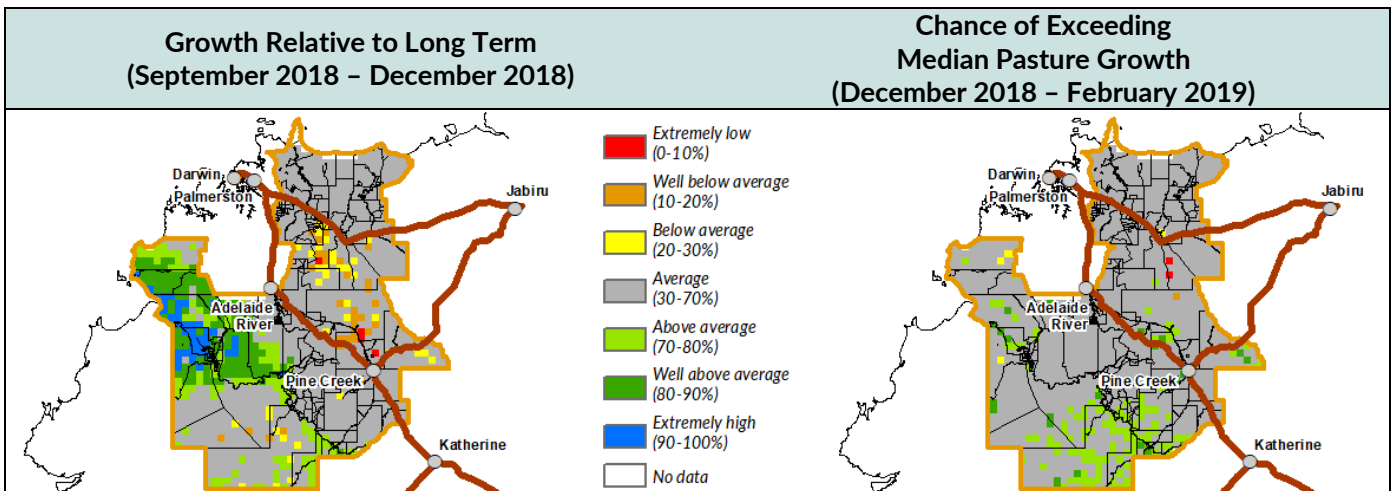
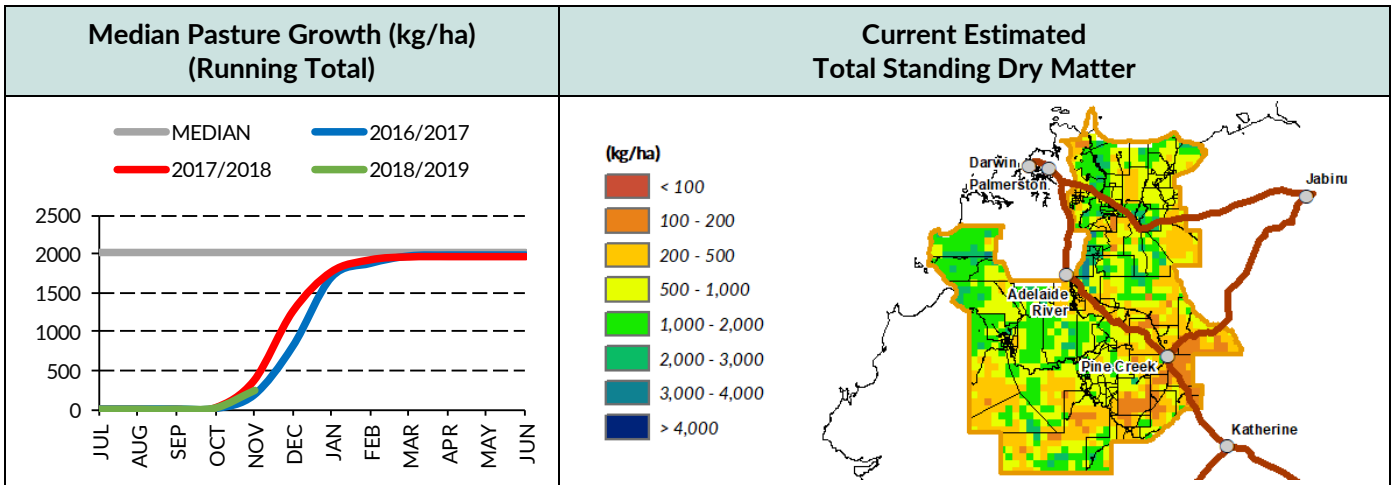
- 2017/18 pasture growth was similar to the long-term median.
- Scattered storms have resulted in a patchy start to the 2018/19 season. The district as a whole has had average pasture growth to date but some western areas have had above average growth.
- 40% of the district has been burnt since 1 July 2018.
- 36% of the district had a high fire risk as at 1 December 2018.

2018/19 Pasture Growth So Far



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.

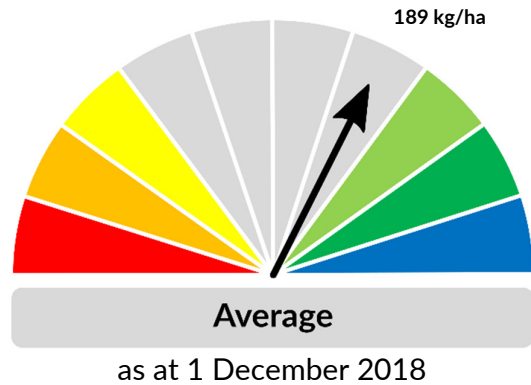
As at 1 December 2018				
(% of district)	<1,000kg/ha	1,000 - 2,000kg/ha	2,000 - 3,000kg/ha	>3,000kg/ha
2018/19 Pasture Growth	97%	3%	0%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	67%	26%	6%	1%



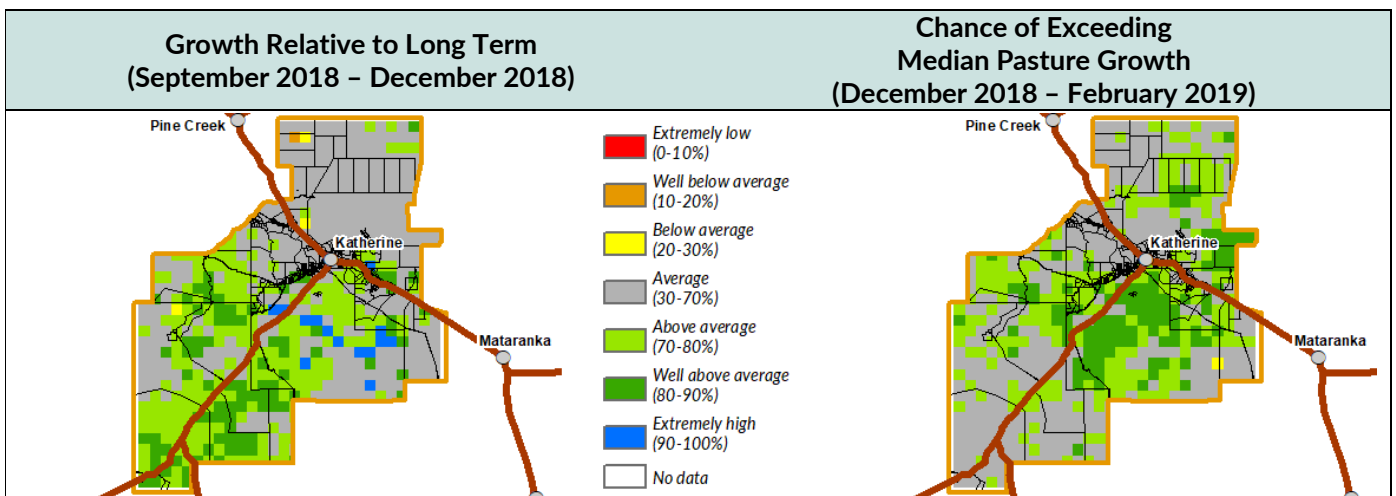
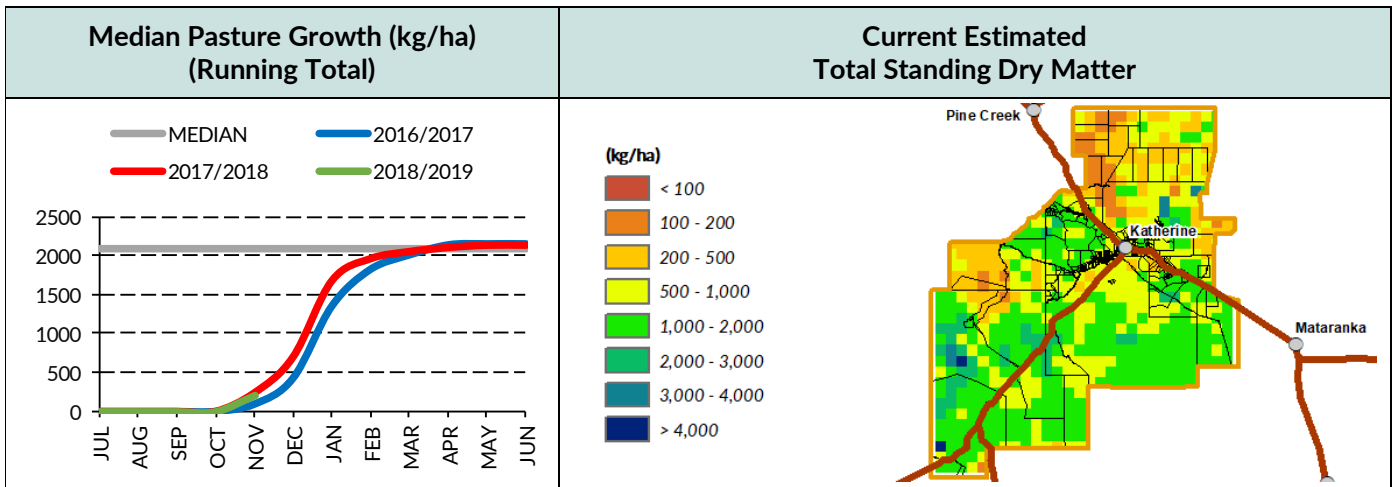
Katherine District

- 2017/18 pasture growth was similar to the long-term median for the district as a whole, but some locations did experience much better growth than others.
- Consistent rain has resulted in good growth so far for the 2018/19 season, especially over the southern parts of the district.
- 20% of the district has been burnt since 1 July 2018.
- 78% of the district had a high fire risk as at 1 December 2018.

2018/19 Pasture Growth So Far



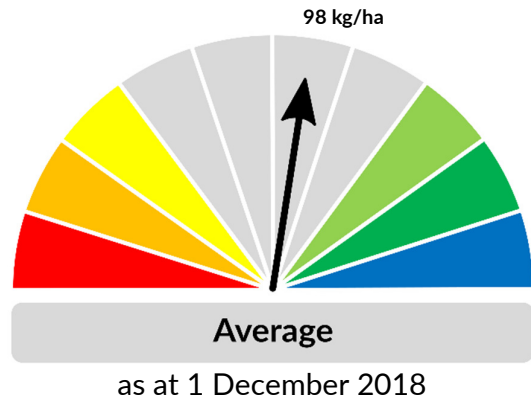
As at 1 December 2018				
(% of district)	<1,000kg/ha	1,000 - 2,000kg/ha	2,000 - 3,000kg/ha	>3,000kg/ha
2018/19 Pasture Growth	100%	0%	0%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	51%	43%	5%	1%



Victoria River District

- 2017/18 pasture growth was similar to the long-term median but quite a lot lower than 2016/17.
- Overall, the district is tracking average growth at this point in the 2018/19 season. There has been above average pasture growth in some parts of the district.
- 16% of the district has been burnt since 1 July 2018.
- 92% of the district had a high fire risk as at 1 December 2018.

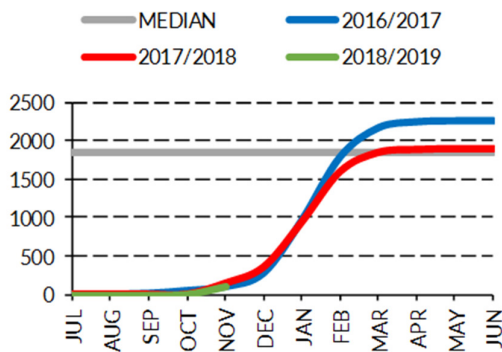
2018/19 Pasture Growth So Far



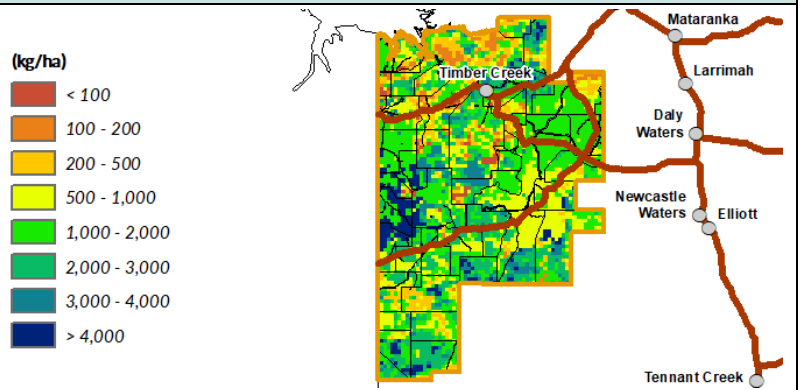
As at 1 December 2018

(% of district)	<1,000kg/ha	1,000 - 2,000kg/ha	2,000 - 3,000kg/ha	>3,000kg/ha
2018/19 Pasture Growth	100%	0%	0%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	35%	35%	18%	12%

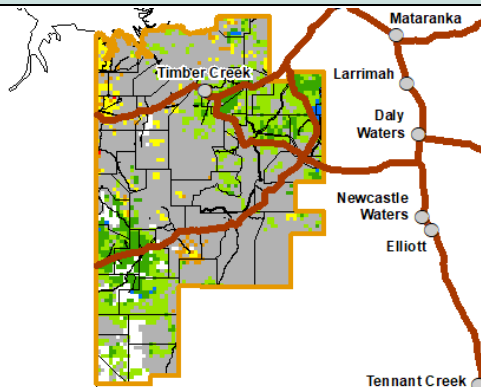
Median Pasture Growth (kg/ha) (Running Total)



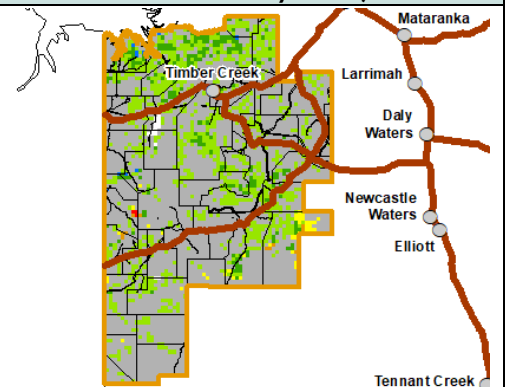
Current Estimated Total Standing Dry Matter



Growth Relative to Long Term (September 2018 – December 2018)



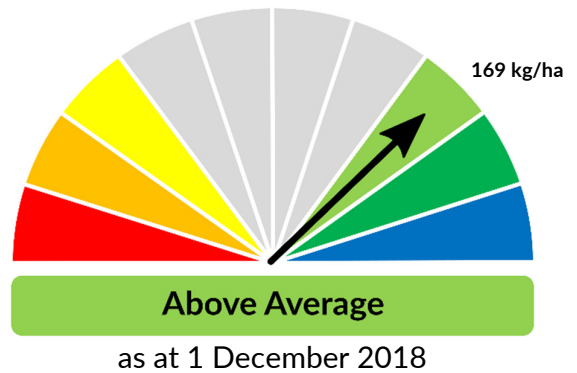
Chance of Exceeding Median Pasture Growth (December 2018 – February 2019)



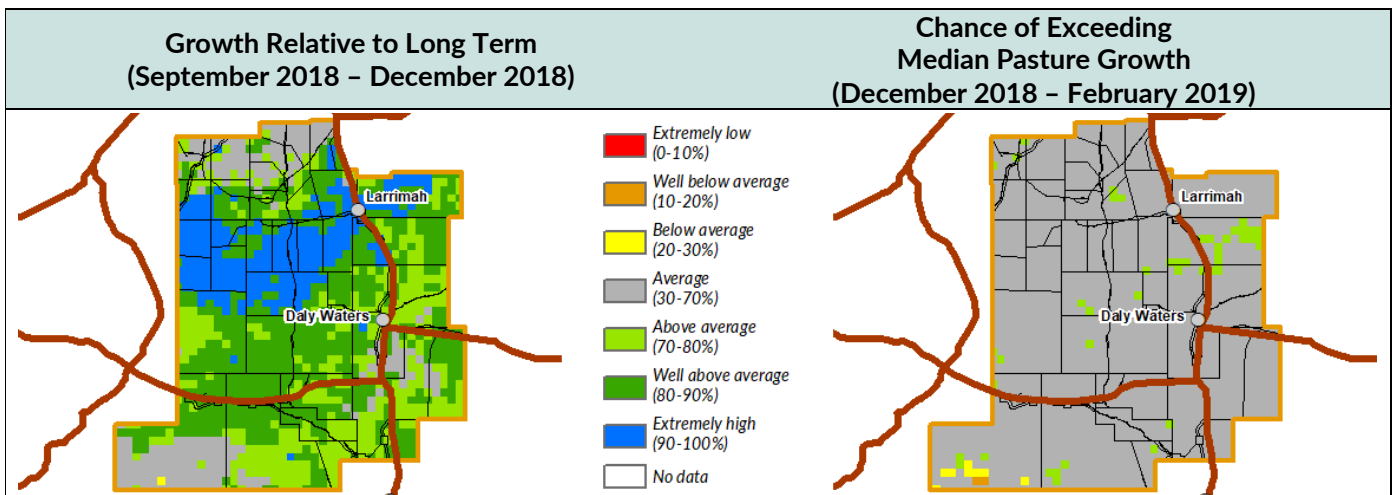
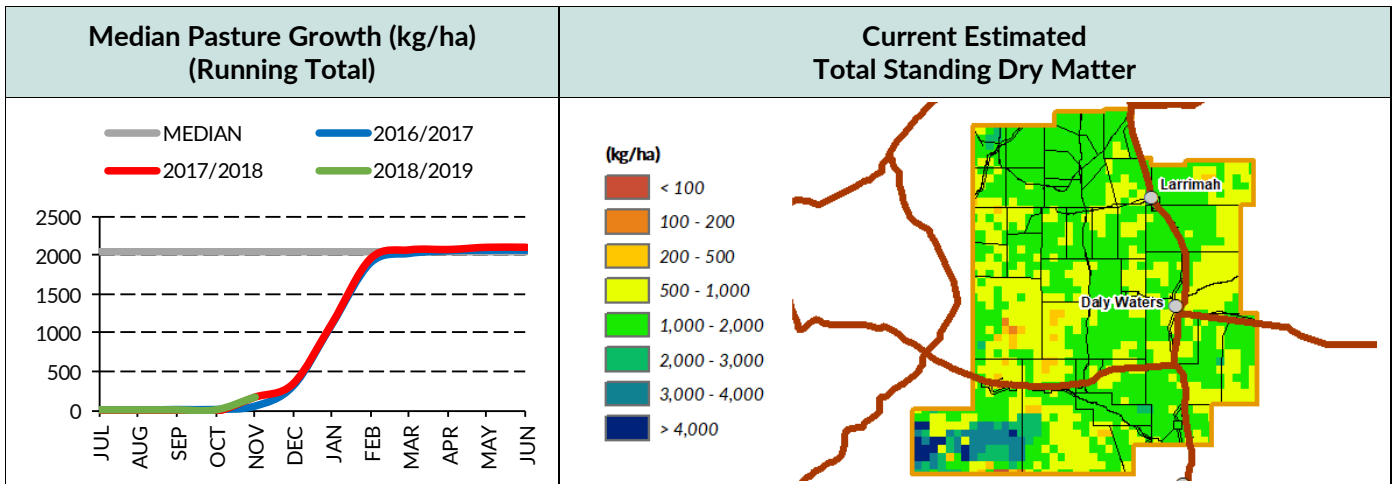
Sturt Plateau District

- 2017/18 pasture growth was slightly better than the long-term median and similar to 2016/17.
- Consistent rain over the majority of the district has led to above average growth over much of the district, and a good start to the 2018/19 season.
- 3% of the district has been burnt since 1 July 2018.
- 100% of the district had a high fire risk as at 1 December 2018.

2018/19 Pasture Growth So Far



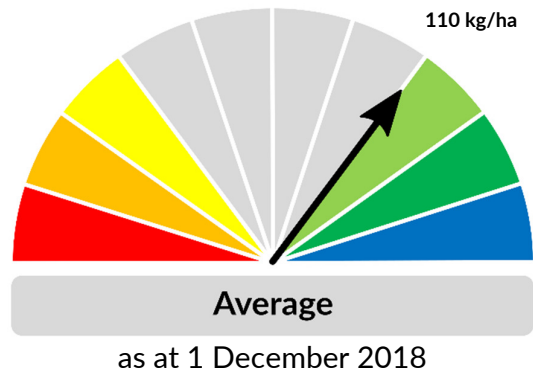
As at 1 December 2018				
(% of district)	<1,000kg/ha	1,000 - 2,000kg/ha	2,000 - 3,000kg/ha	>3,000kg/ha
2018/19 Pasture Growth	100%	0%	0%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	37%	57%	3%	3%



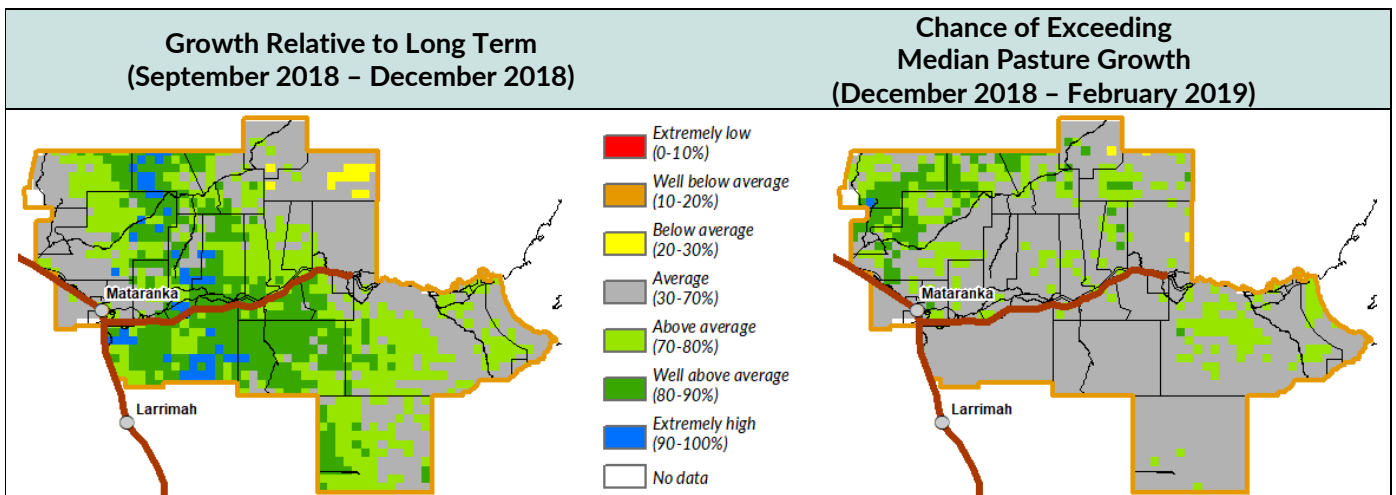
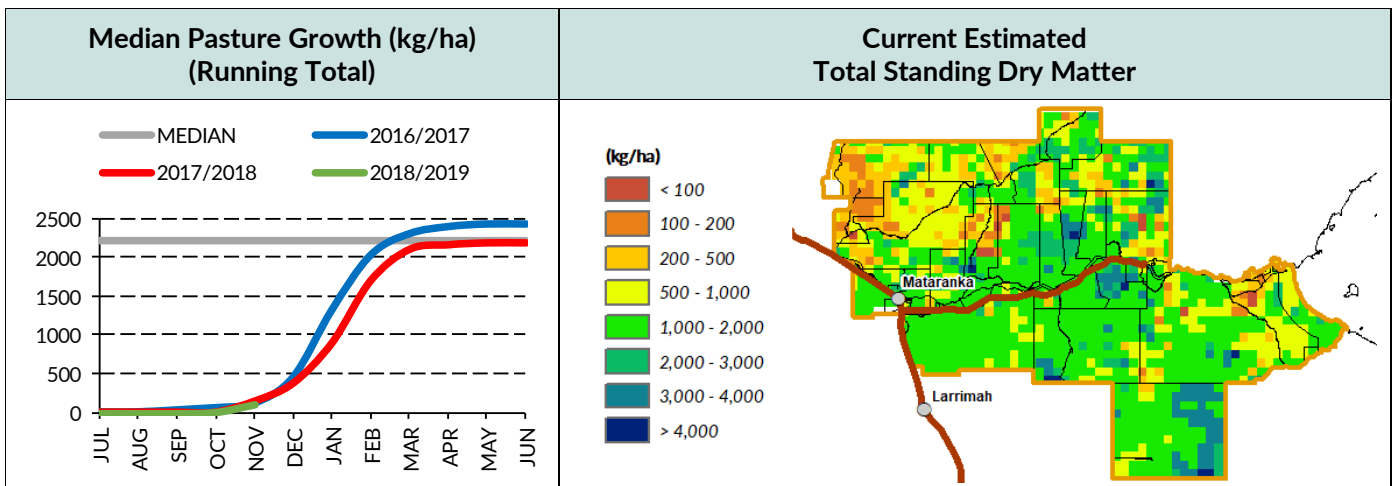
Roper District

- 2017/18 pasture growth was similar to the long-term median but lower than 2016/17.
- Scattered storms have resulted in average to above average growth over much of the district so far for the 2018/19 season.
- 18% of the district has been burnt since 1 July 2018.
- 88% of the district had a high fire risk as at 1 December 2018.

2018/19 Pasture Growth So Far



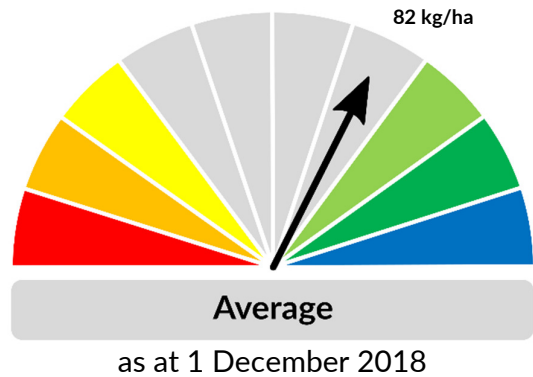
As at 1 December 2018				
(% of district)	<1,000kg/ha	1,000 - 2,000kg/ha	2,000 - 3,000kg/ha	>3,000kg/ha
2018/19 Pasture Growth	100%	0%	0%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	35%	51%	8%	6%



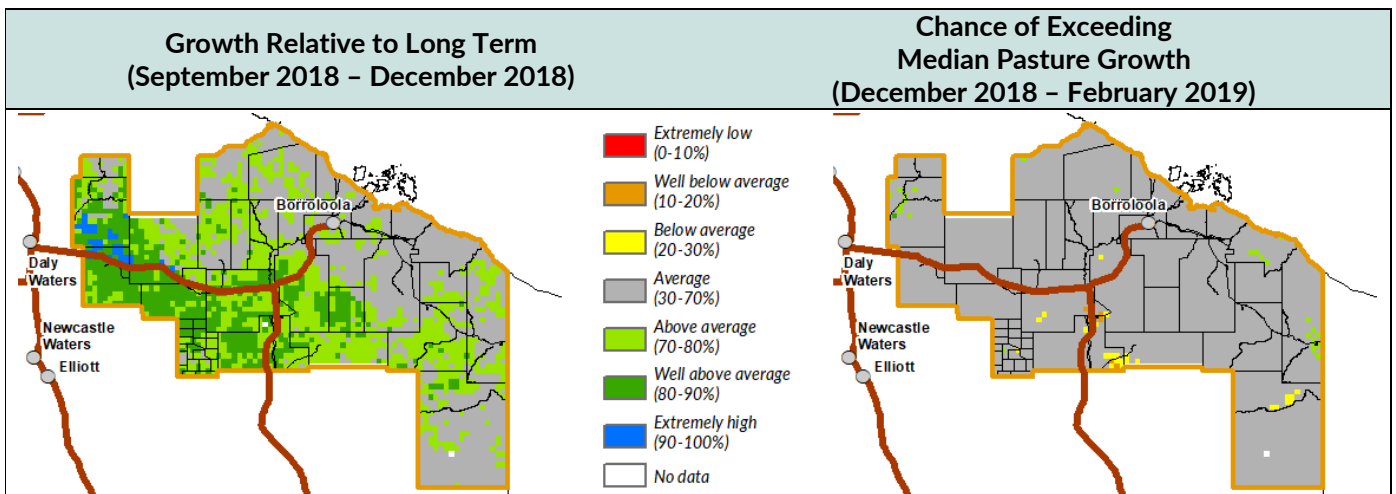
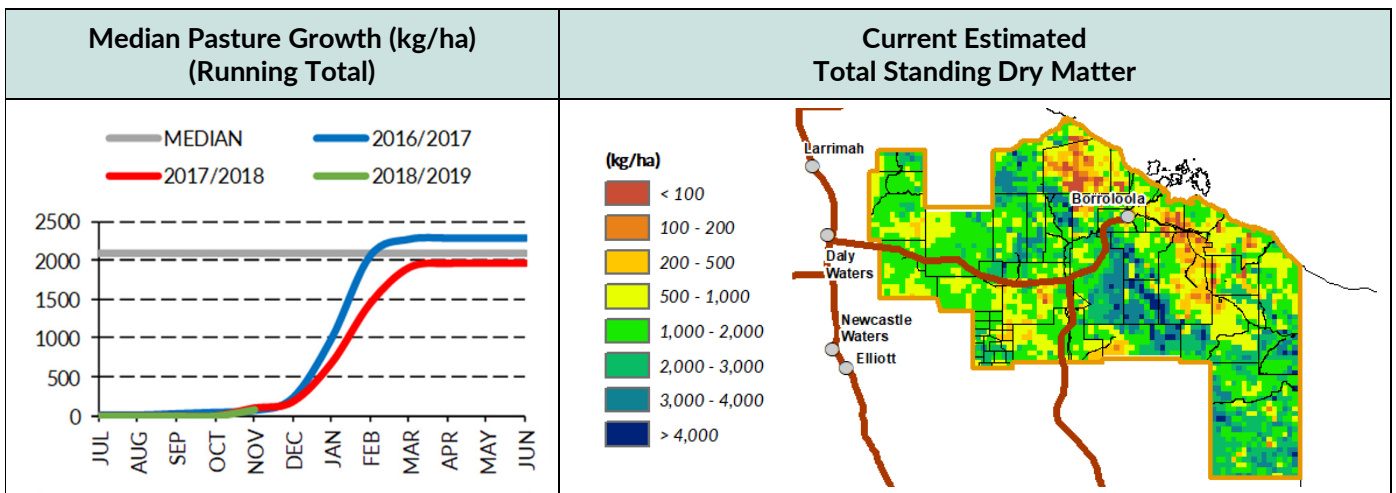
Gulf District

- 2017/18 pasture growth was similar to the long-term median but lower than 2016/17.
- Scattered storms, especially in the western and southern parts of the district, have produced good growth so far for the 2018/19 season.
- 9% of the district has been burnt since 1 July 2018.
- 93% of the district had a high fire risk as at 1 December 2018.

2018/19 Pasture Growth So Far



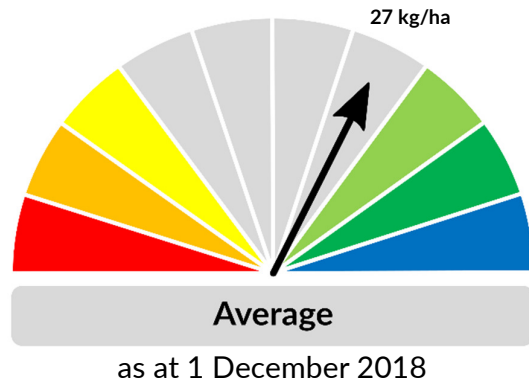
As at 1 December 2018				
(% of district)	<1,000kg/ha	1,000 - 2,000kg/ha	2,000 - 3,000kg/ha	>3,000kg/ha
2018/19 Pasture Growth	100%	0%	0%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	35%	39%	16%	10%



Barkly District

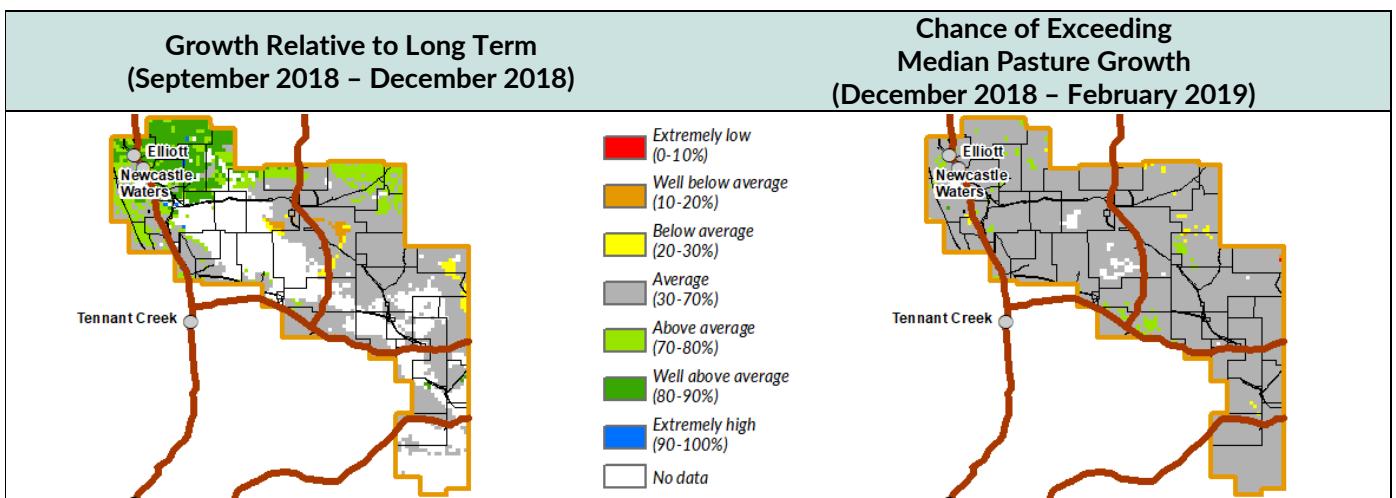
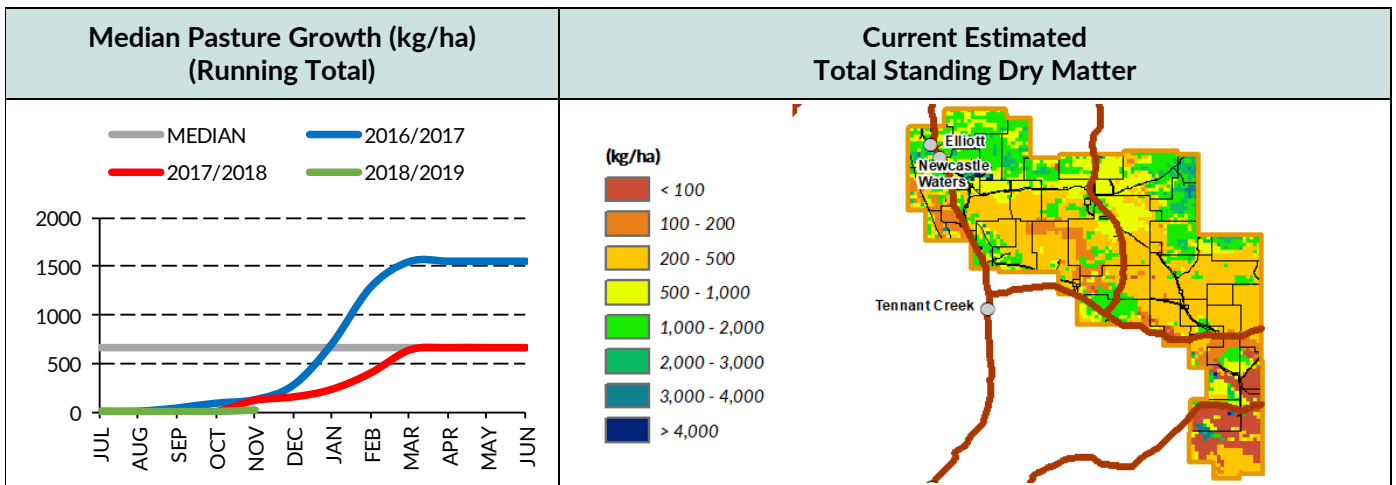
- 2017/18 pasture growth for the district as a whole was similar to the long-term median, but there was considerable variation depending on location.
- With the exception of the far north western corner of the district, minimal pasture growth has occurred so far for 2018/19, but this is typical for this time of year.
- Less than 1% of the district has been burnt since 1 July 2018.
- 49% of the district had a high fire risk as at 1 December 2018.

2018/19 Pasture Growth So Far



As at 1 December 2018

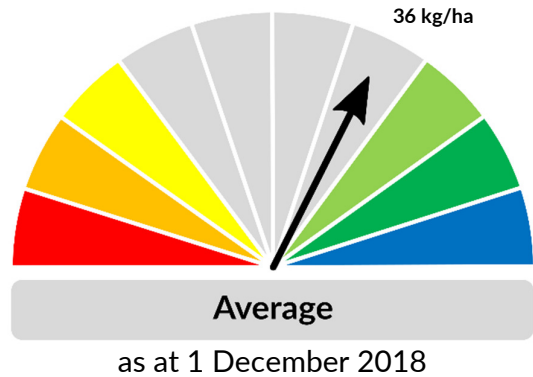
(% of district)	<250kg/ha	250 - 500kg/ha	500 - 1,000kg/ha	>1,000kg/ha
2018/19 Pasture Growth	100%	0%	0%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	19%	31%	20%	30%



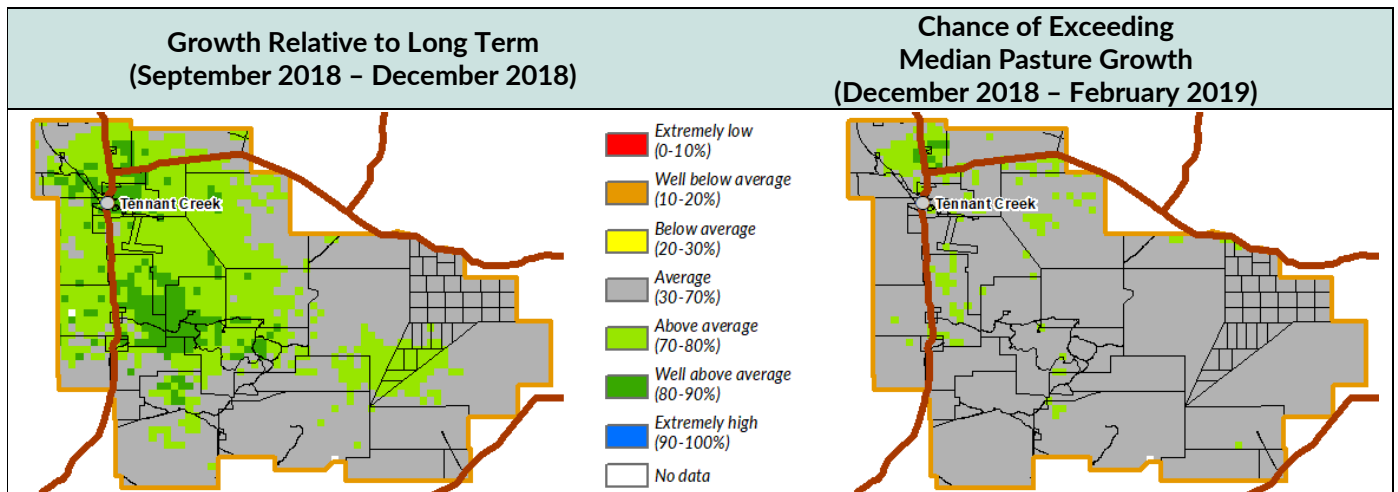
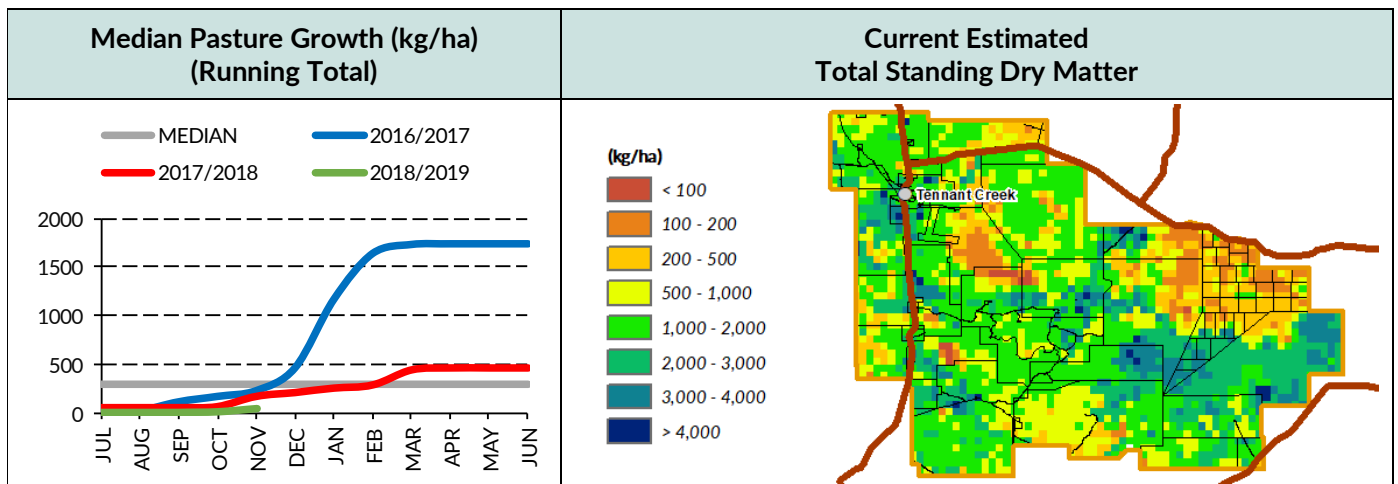
Tennant Creek District

- 2017/18 pasture growth was similar to the long-term median but much lower than 2016/17.
- Patchy spring rain across much of the district has resulted in an average start to the 2018/19 season overall, but some areas have experienced above average growth for this time of the year.
- Less than 1% of the district has been burnt since 1 July 2018.
- 87% of the district had a high fire risk as at 1 December 2018.

2018/19 Pasture Growth So Far



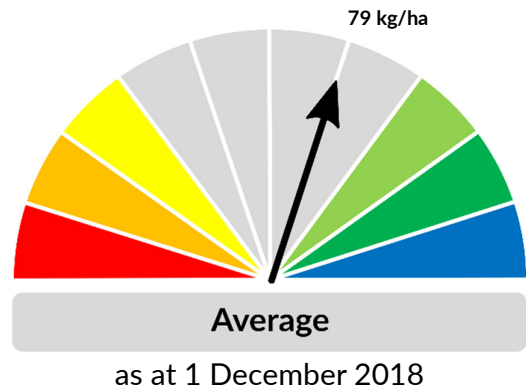
As at 1 December 2018				
(% of district)	<250kg/ha	250 - 500kg/ha	500 - 1,000kg/ha	>1,000kg/ha
2018/19 Pasture Growth	100%	0%	0%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	8%	9%	19%	64%



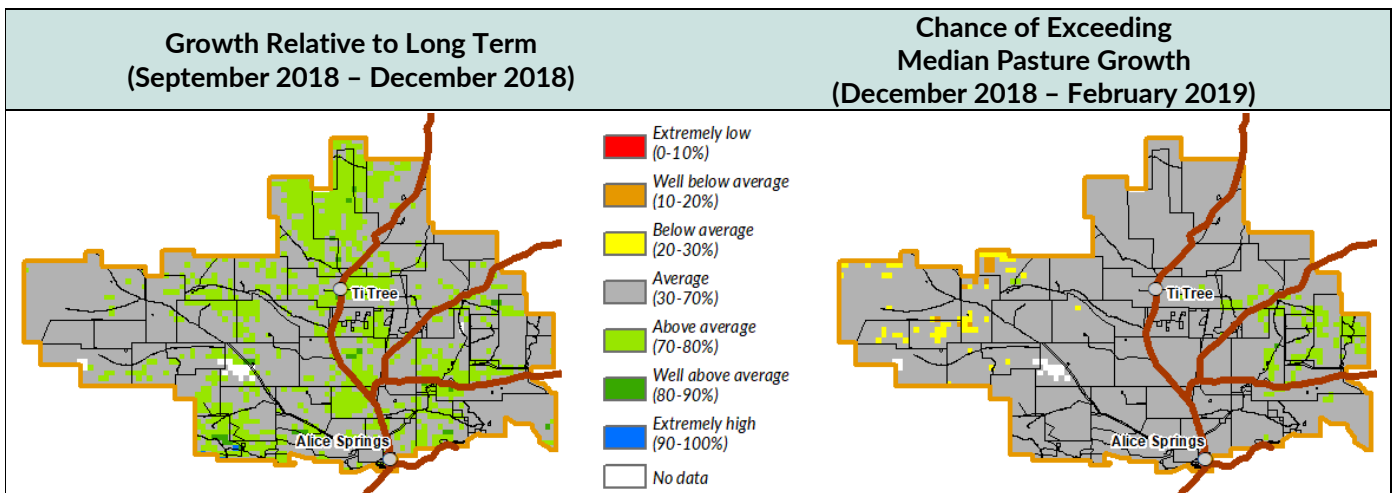
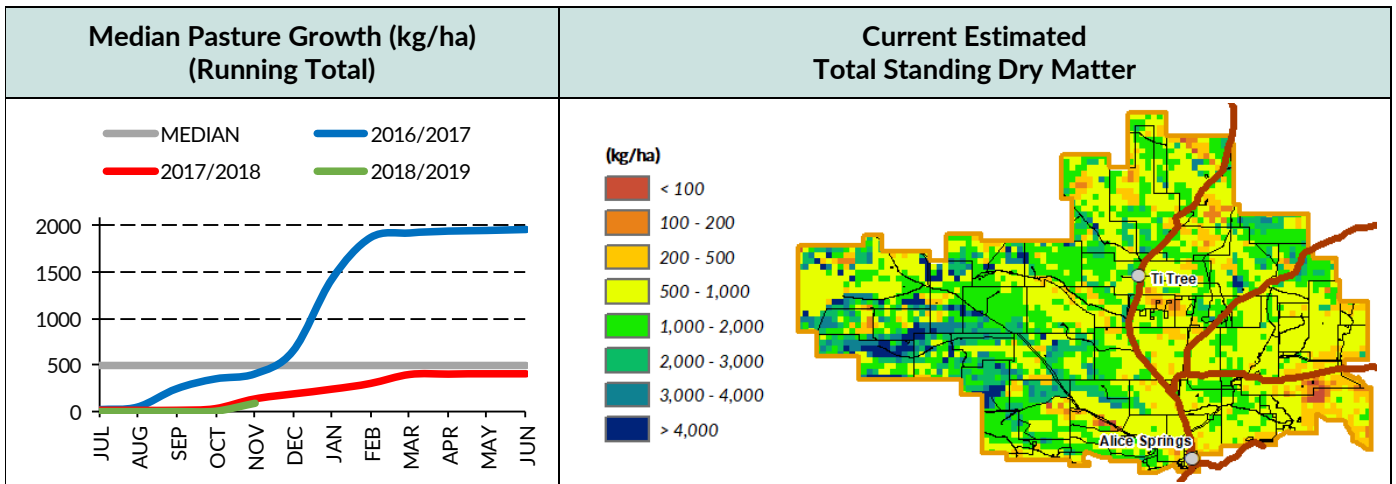
Northern Alice Springs District

- 2017/18 pasture growth was slightly lower than the long-term median and very much lower than 2016/17.
- Patchy spring rain across much of the district has resulted in some pasture growth and an average start to the 2018/19 season.
- Less than 1% of the district has been burnt since 1 July 2018.
- 96% of the district had a high fire risk as at 1 December 2018.

2018/19 Pasture Growth So Far



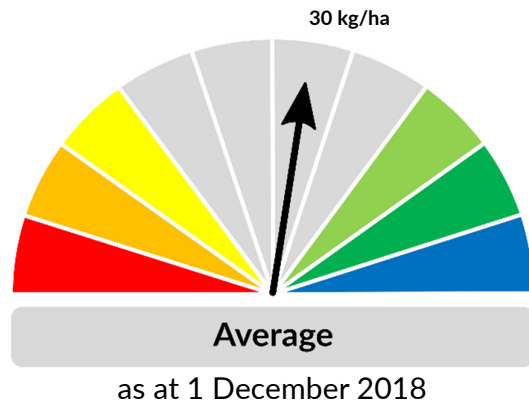
As at 1 December 2018				
(% of district)	<250kg/ha	250 - 500kg/ha	500 - 1,000kg/ha	>1,000kg/ha
2018/19 Pasture Growth	97%	3%	0%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	3%	9%	43%	45%



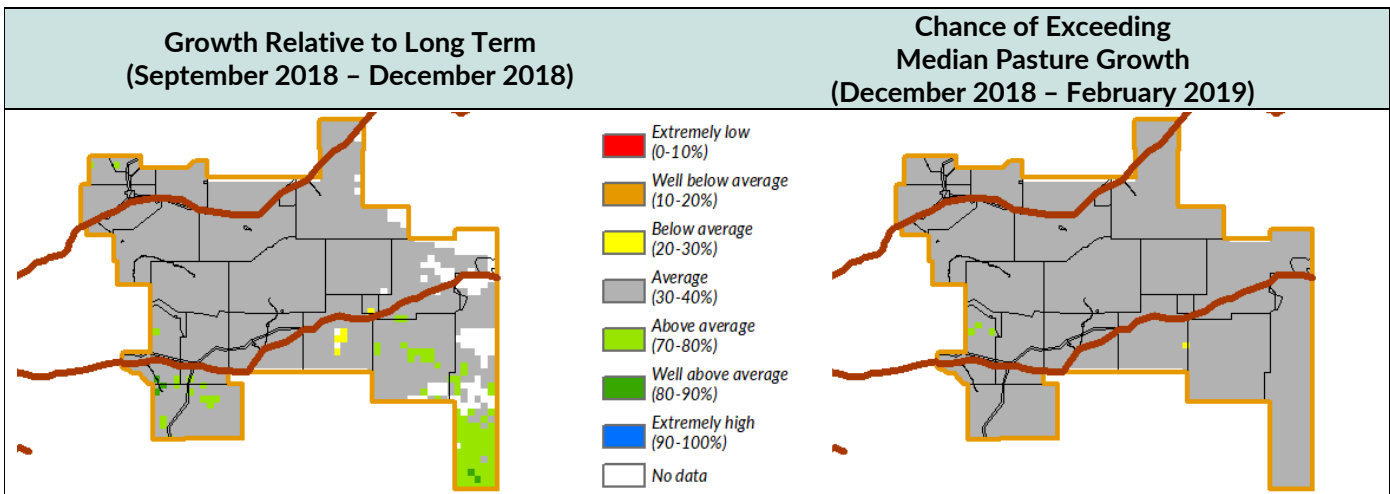
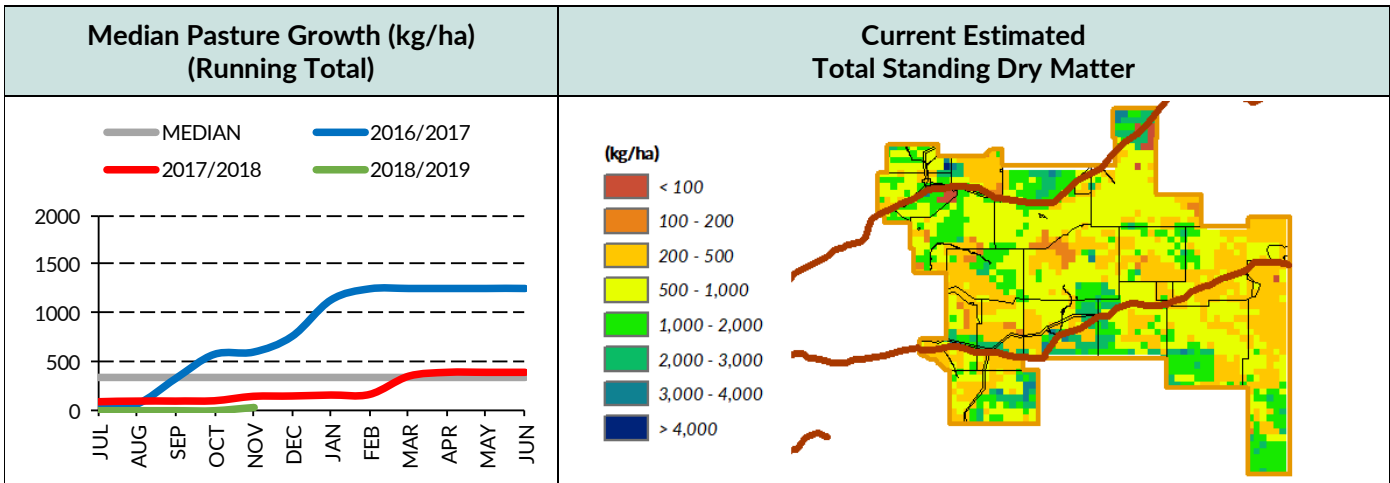
Plenty District

- 2017/18 pasture growth was similar to the long-term median across the district, however some central areas experienced below average pasture growth (in the lowest 30% of years).
- The 2018/19 season is considered average for this time of year despite minimal spring growth.
- Less than 1% of the district has been burnt since 1 July 2018.
- 72% of the district had a high fire risk as at 1 December 2018.

2018/19 Pasture Growth So Far



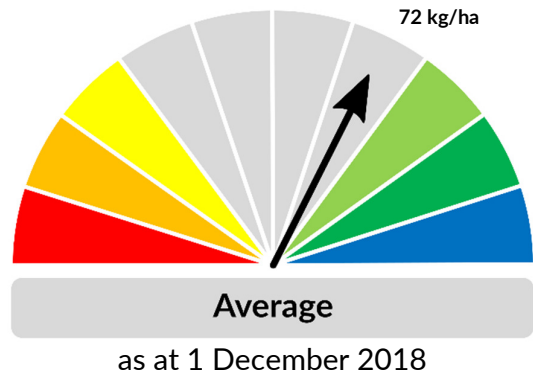
As at 1 December 2018				
(% of district)	<250kg/ha	250 - 500kg/ha	500 - 1,000kg/ha	>1,000kg/ha
2018/19 Pasture Growth	100%	0%	0%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	6%	29%	39%	26%



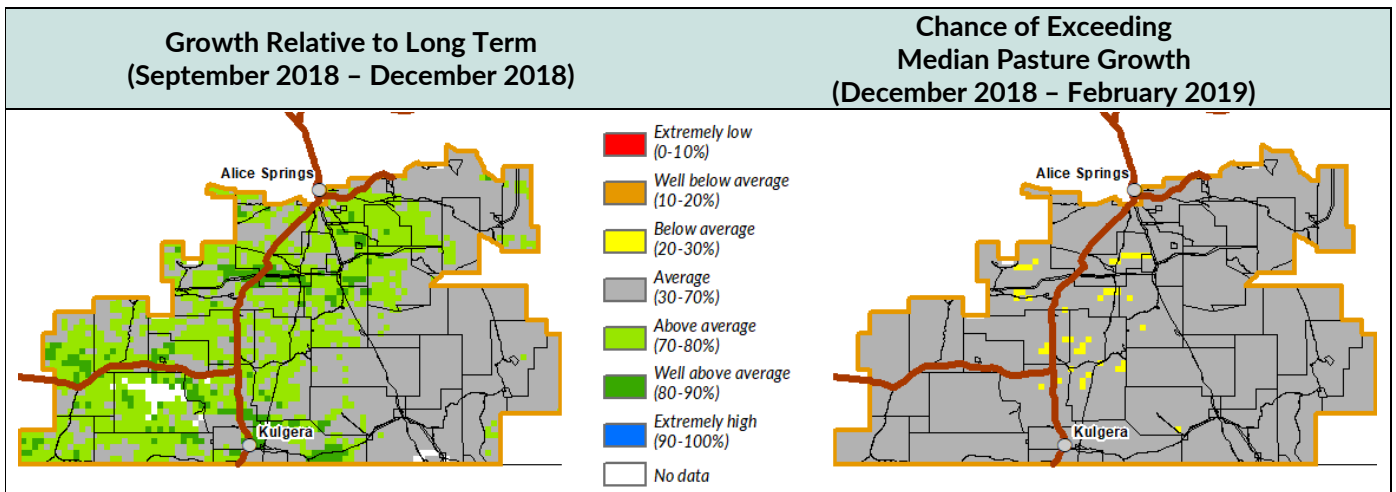
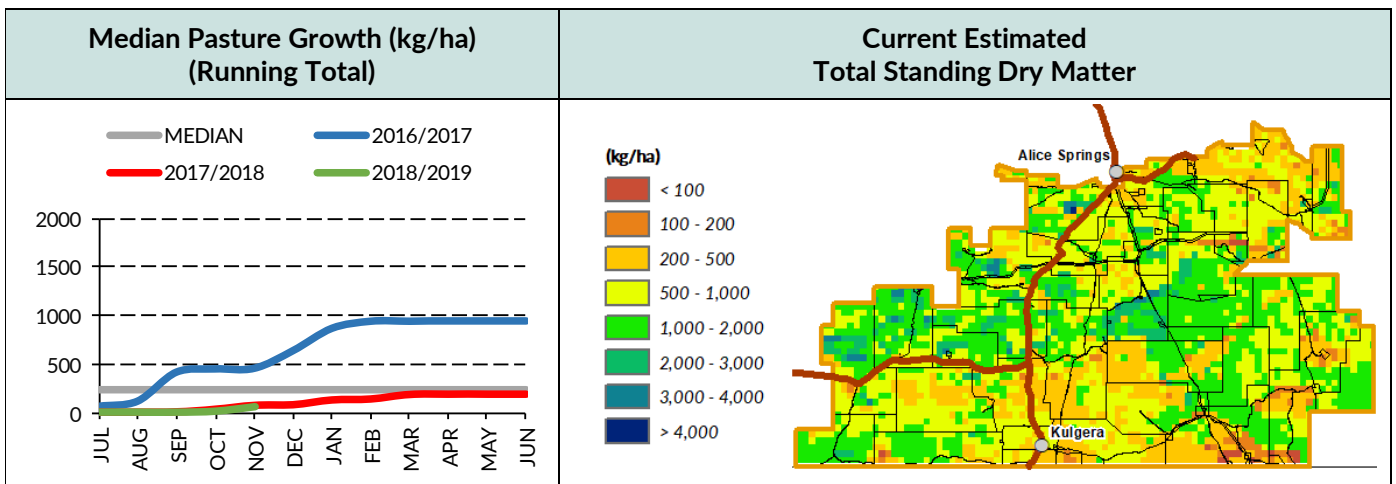
Southern Alice Springs District

- 2017/18 pasture growth was similar to the long-term median but much lower than 2016/17.
- Patchy spring rain has resulted in an average start to the 2018/19 season for the district overall, with some areas experiencing above average growth for this time of year.
- Less than 1% of the district has been burnt since 1 July 2018.
- 83% of the district had a high fire risk as at 1 December 2018.

2018/19 Pasture Growth So Far



As at 1 December 2018				
(% of district)	<250kg/ha	250 - 500kg/ha	500 - 1,000kg/ha	>1,000kg/ha
2018/19 Pasture Growth	99%	1%	0%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	6%	18%	37%	39%



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.

Disclaimer

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