

Northern Territory Pastoral Feed Outlook

August to October 2026

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. This edition summarises modelled pasture growth in October 2026. 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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[Northern Territory Seasonal Outlook – as at October 2026](#)

Individual District Summaries:

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[Victoria River District](#)

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[Roper District](#)

[Gulf District](#)

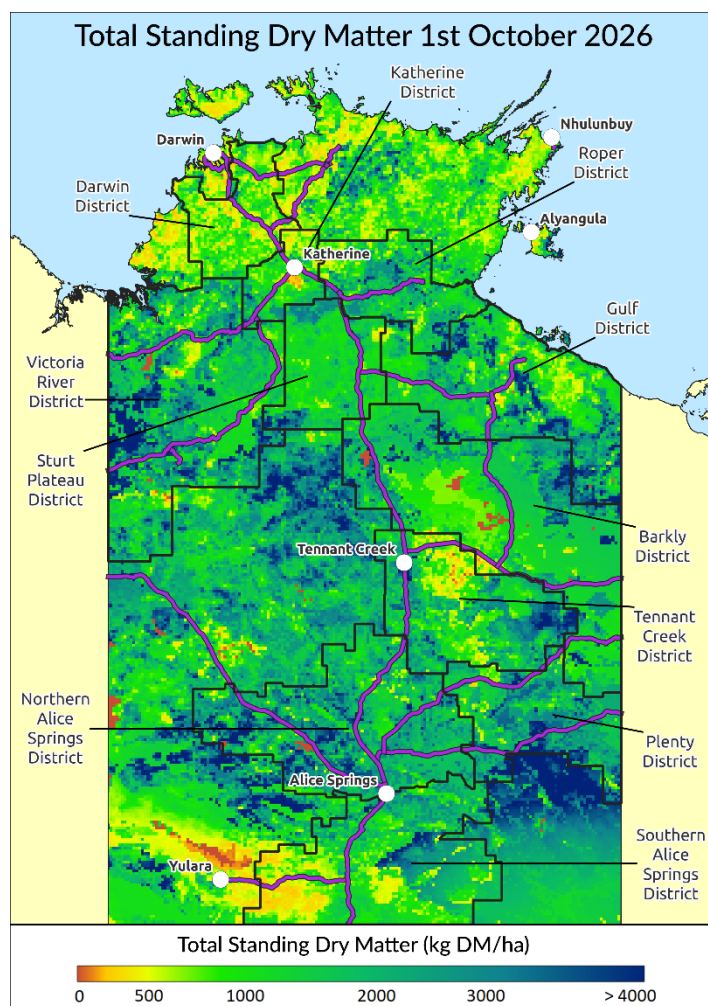
[Barkly District](#)

[Tennant Creek District](#)

[Northern Alice Springs District](#)

[Plenty District](#)

[Southern Alice Springs District](#)



For further information about this Outlook, please contact Chris Materne on 08 8951 8135.

All pasture data in this report is derived from AussieGRASS <https://www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au/aussiegrass/>

Summary of current situation and trends – all districts – October 2026

Rainfall totals during the northern dry season (May to September) were above average for most of the southern and eastern Northern Territory and parts of the Top End. Area-averaged mean temperatures were also warmer than average for most of the NT.

Pasture growth remains seasonally low across most of the Northern Territory reflecting the normal dry season limitations on plant growth. However, some areas of the Northern and Southern Alice Springs districts have shown above average growth relative to the long-term median due to recent rainfall events. Despite this, cumulative total growth remains low. Pasture biomass levels are patchy and varied in most of the northern districts, while the southern districts are showing large areas of above average to very high relative biomass. Dry season fires have removed large areas of standing dry matter in a few districts including Roper, Gulf & Tennant Creek.

Modelled pasture growth predictions for the next 3 months suggest that growth is likely to be generally average to above average for most of the southern districts; however, large areas of below average growth are likely in some of the northern districts, particularly Darwin & Katherine due to later than usual northern rainfall onset.

Dry conditions in the north and high carry-over pasture biomass in the south continue to drive very high grassfire risk across most pastoral districts.

There is a strong El Niño event underway with relative-Niño3.4 values forecast to reach record levels during late spring or summer and persist into autumn 2027.

KEY

Green = low risk

Orange = watch

Red = high risk

KEY

↑ = increasing trend

↓ = decreasing trend

↔ = steady

	Northern Territory Pastoral Districts											
Indicator	Darwin	Katherine	VRD	Sturt Plateau	Roper	Gulf	Barkly	Tennant Creek	Northern Alice Springs	Plenty	Southern Alice Springs	Comments
2026/27 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, taking into account the forecasted model predictions

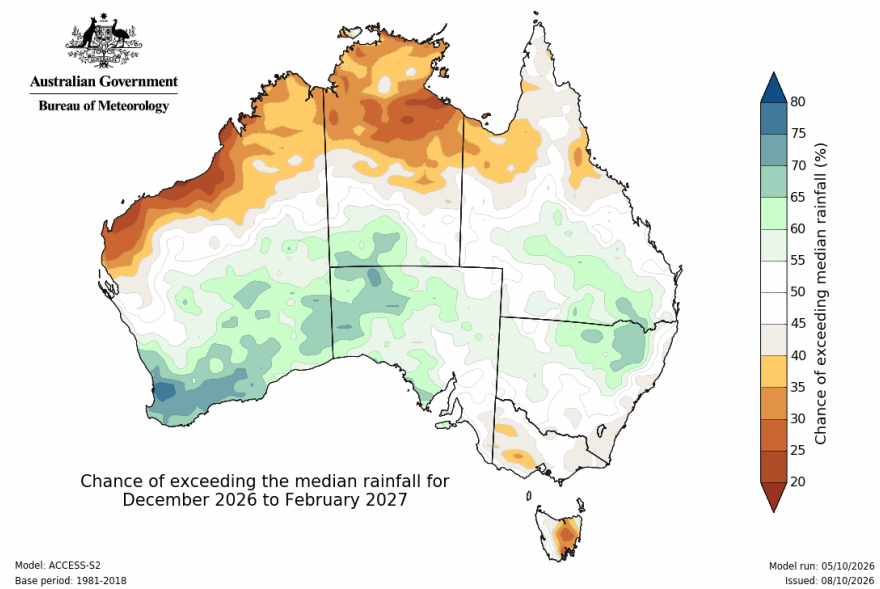
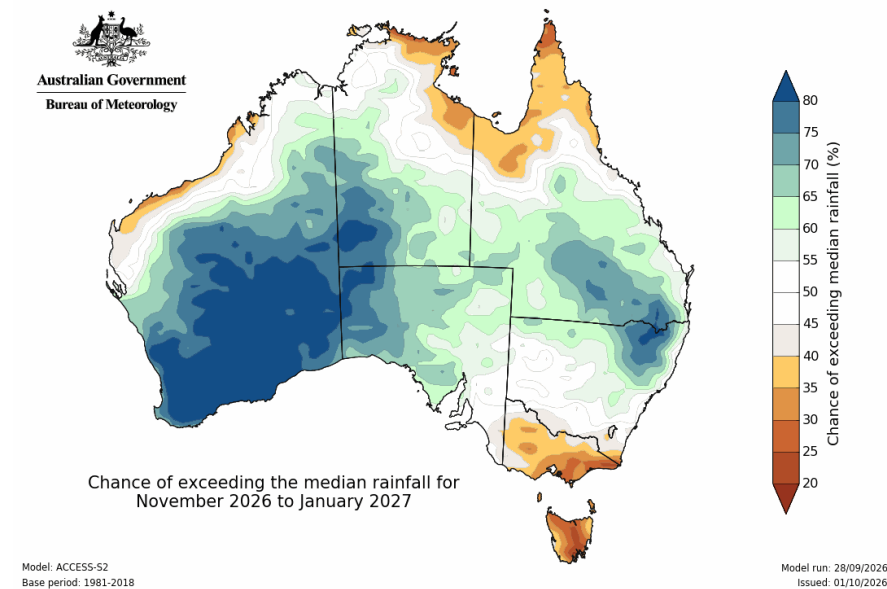
Northern Territory Seasonal Outlook as at October 2026*

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 BoM outlook for November 2026 to January 2027 indicates that:

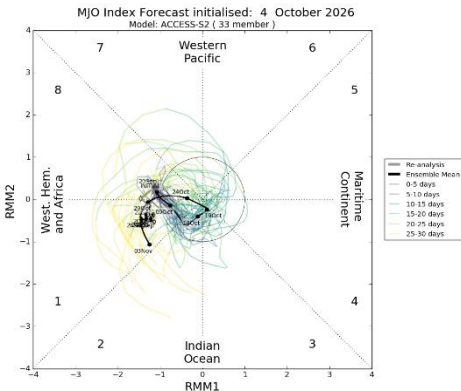
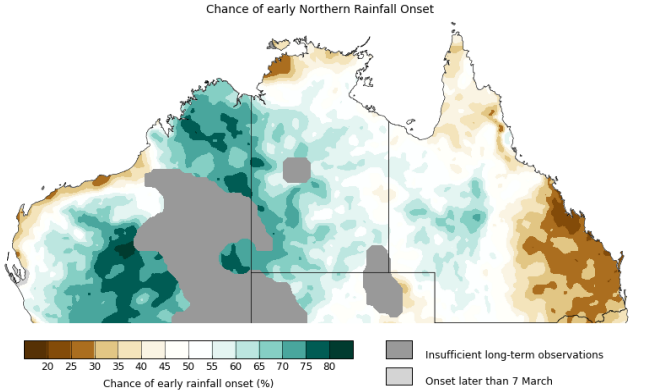
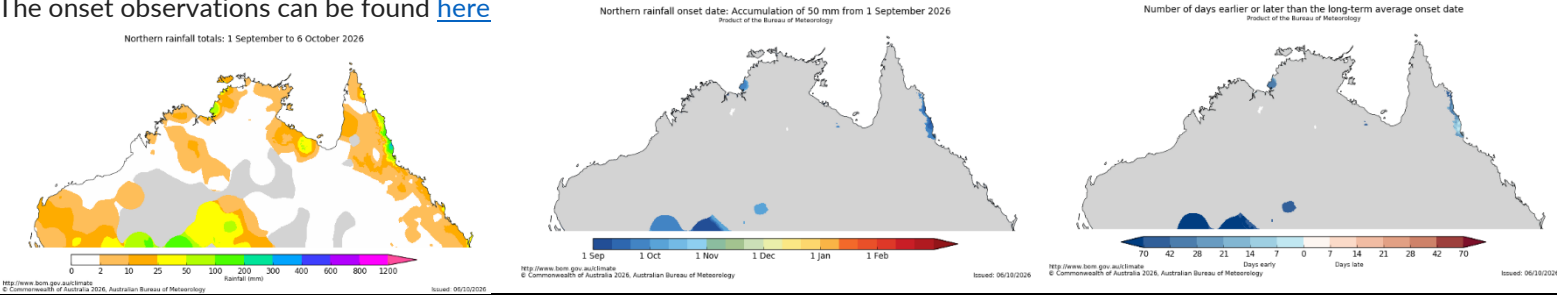
- The chance of exceeding the median rainfall between November 2026 & January 2027 is **average** to **high** (50-80%) in the southern and north-west NT, while for the northern NT, the chance of exceeding the median rainfall is **low** to **average** (25-45%). The forecasted December to February chance of **higher** than median rainfall is low to very low across the northern half of the NT, and average to moderate in the southern half of the NT. This suggests that the second half of the wet season (Jan–Feb) is particularly unlikely to exceed median rainfall. However, past outlook accuracy for this time of year is **very low** to **moderate** (0-55%), and seasonal forecasts should be checked again throughout the wet season to get the most accurate prediction closer to the time of forecast.
- Maximum temperatures are likely to be **warmer** than average right across the NT. Past outlook accuracy for this time of year is low to good (45-75%).
- **Warmer** than average nights are also likely for the entire NT. Past outlook accuracy for this time of year is moderate to high (50-100%) for most of the NT but low (0-50%) in the central NT.



Influencing Climate Drivers

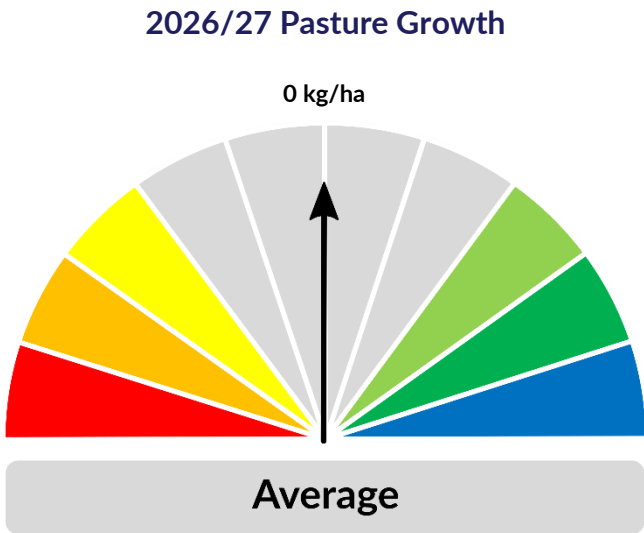
This forecast reflects the status and forecasts for several climate drivers, including positive ENSO, neutral SAM and a potential positive IOD event.

Climate Influences	Comments (sourced from the Australian Bureau of Meteorology)
El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) positive Pacific Ocean Update (As at 6 October 2026) *From December 2024 the Bureau of Meteorology is no longer issuing (ENSO) Outlook Watch and Alert statements including the ENSO dial.	The El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is strongly positive. El Niño is at near-record levels. Both oceanic and atmospheric indices reflect values consistent with a strong El Niño. The latest relative Niño3.4 index value for the week ending 27 September 2026 is +2.72 °C, which is the second-highest value on record, behind +2.76 °C for the week ending 22 November 2015. All models forecast the tropical Pacific to continue warming through the southern hemisphere spring, likely peaking in late spring or summer, and persisting into autumn 2027. To see larger versions of these images, go to Southern Hemisphere Monitoring Pacific Ocean & Outlook Niño 3.4. The first chart, '30-day running average of the SOI', shows a significant negative trend from May 2024 to October 2026, reaching a value of -22.5. The second chart, 'Relative Niño3.4 index', shows a strong positive trend, peaking at +2.72 in late September 2026 and remaining high through the forecast period.
Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) Current outlook: Neutral Indian Ocean Update (As at 1 October 2026)	The Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) is currently neutral. While values have been positive for the last 3 weeks, they have not been sustained above the positive threshold (+0.4 °C). A positive IOD is likely to develop during the southern hemisphere spring and persist into early summer, although model guidance indicates some uncertainty in the strength and duration of the event. To see larger versions of these images, go to Southern Hemisphere Monitoring Indian Ocean & Outlook IOD. The first chart, 'IOD index', shows a recent positive spike but remains below the +0.4 threshold. The second chart, 'IOD index' with ensemble members, shows a forecast of a positive IOD developing in late 2026 and persisting into early 2027.
Southern Annular Mode (SAM) Current outlook: Neutral Southern Ocean Update (As at 1 October 2026)	The SAM is currently neutral. The Southern Annular Mode (SAM) index has been mostly negative during September. SAM is neutral as of 26 September. It is forecast to remain neutral during the next week. To see larger versions of these images, go to Southern Hemisphere Monitoring Southern Ocean & Outlook SAM. The chart shows the SAM daily index from September 5 to October 31, 2026. It indicates a recent negative phase followed by a forecast of a neutral phase.

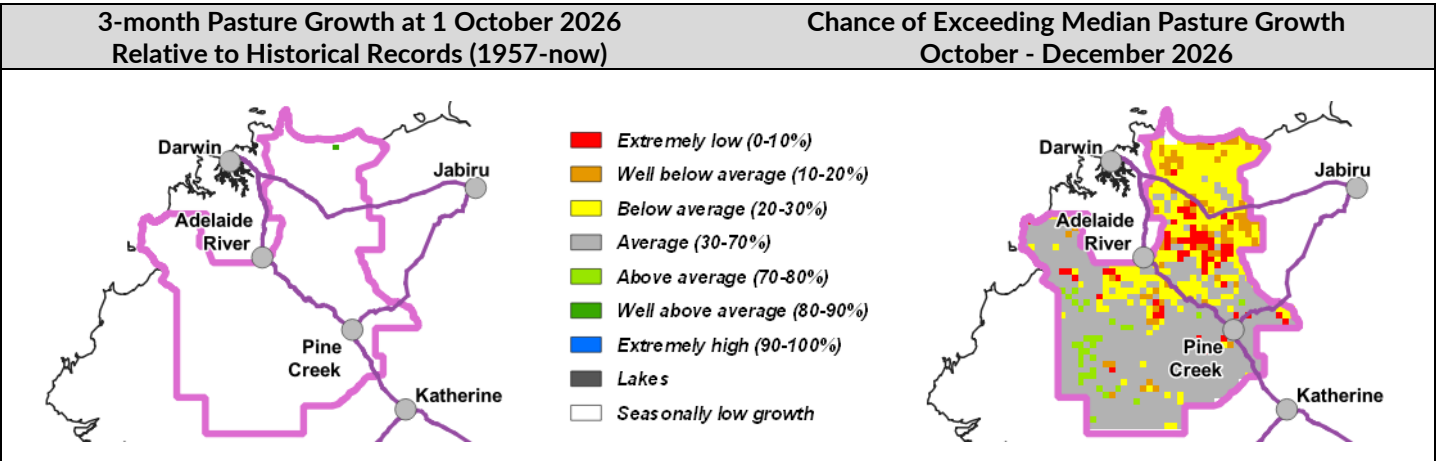
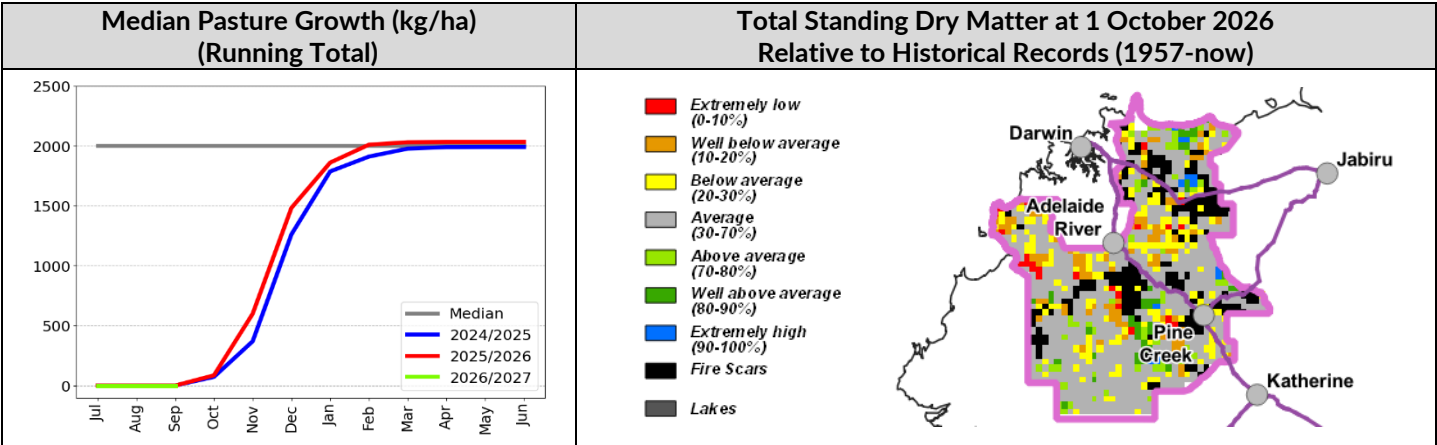
Seasonal Indicator	Comments (sourced from the Australian Bureau of Meteorology & the NT Department of Industry, Tourism & Trade)		
Madden–Julian Oscillation (MJO) Outlook: Moderate-weakening Tropics Update (As at 4 October 2026)	The MJO pulse is moderately strong. The moderate Madden–Julian Oscillation (MJO) is currently in the Western Hemisphere. As of 4 October, forecasts indicate it is most likely to remain in this region and weaken over the coming week, largely influenced by the strong El Niño signal. 		
Wet Season Onset Outlook 2026/27: Early Northern Rainfall Onset Outlook (As at 27 August 2026) This is the final issue of the northern rainfall onset forecast for the 2026–27 season.	Average to early for much of NT, late in the Top End. For most of the southern and central NT there is a 60–80% chance of an earlier than normal northern rainfall onset, particularly in the western half. However for northern coastal regions, particularly the north-west Top End including the Darwin region, rainfall onset is likely to be delayed, with a 60–75% chance of a later than normal northern rainfall onset predicted. The northern rainfall onset date occurs when the rainfall total reaches 50 mm since the 1st of September. It is considered approximately the amount of rainfall required to stimulate plant growth. 		
Observations 2026/27 As at 6 October 2026	The onset observations can be found here 		

Darwin District

- The Darwin district is still experiencing typical, seasonally low pasture growth which is considered **average** for this time of year.
- Relative pasture biomass levels are varied and patchy but generally **average** to **low** over much of the district, particularly where fires have removed standing dry matter.
- Over the next 3 months, pasture growth is likely to be **low** to **average** over much of the district, with minor scattered areas of **above average** growth possible, particularly in the south-west of the district.
- 41% of the district has burnt since January 1st. 11% has burnt since July 1st 2026.

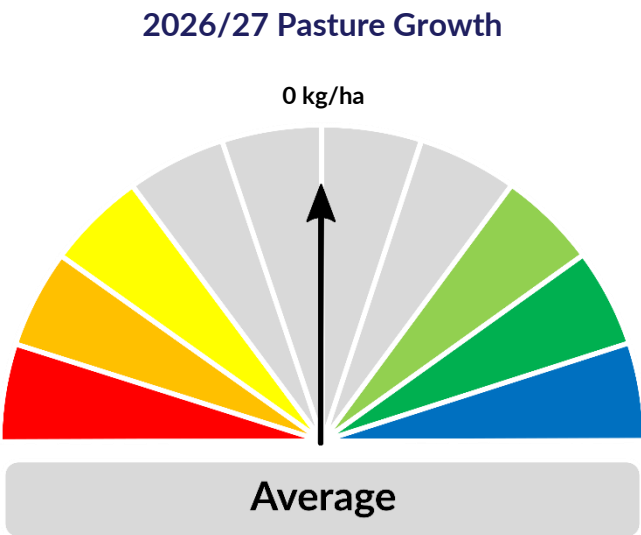


As at 1 October 2026				
(% of district)	<1,000kg/ha	1,000 - 2,000kg/ha	2,000 - 3,000kg/ha	>3,000kg/ha
2026/2027 Pasture Growth	100%	0%	0%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	67%	30%	3%	<1%

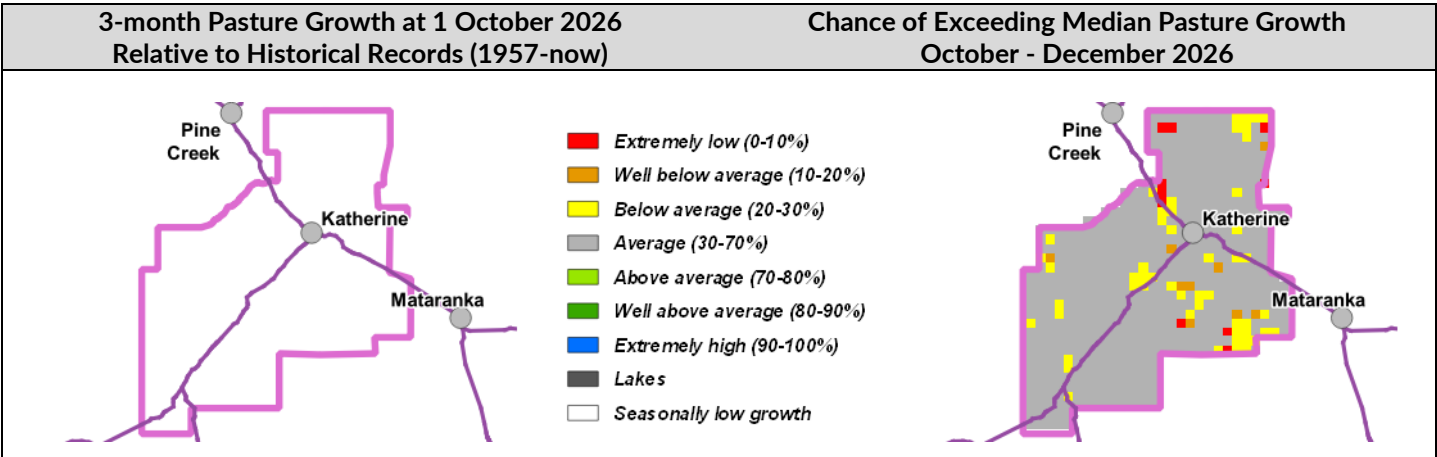
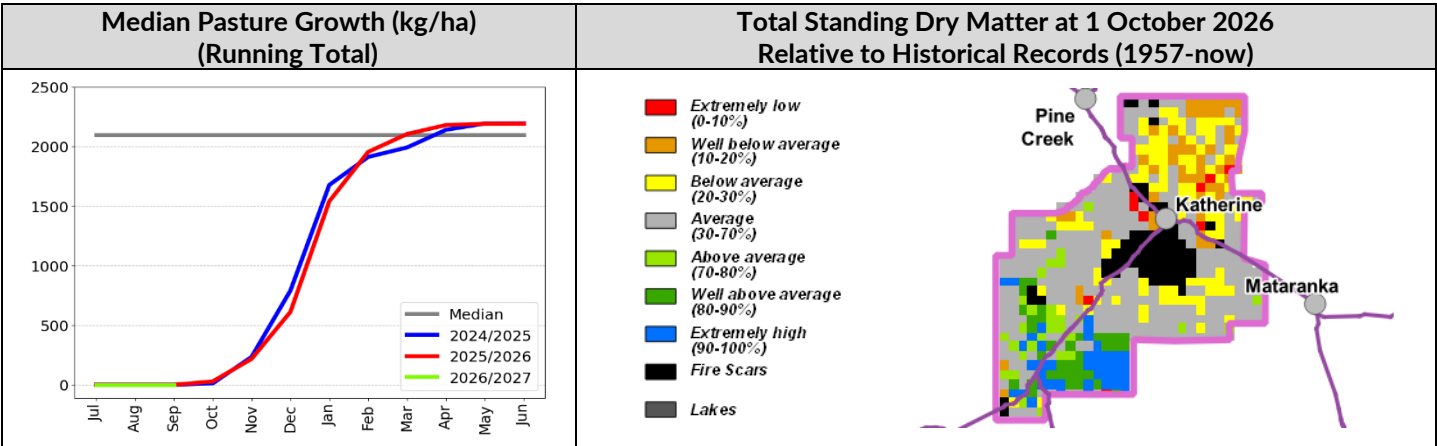


Katherine District

- The Katherine district is still experiencing typical, seasonally low pasture growth which is considered **average** for this time of year.
- While pasture biomass levels are still **high** in the south, the rest of the district is mostly **low** to **average**, particularly in the central regions where fires have removed standing dry matter.
- Over the next 3 months, pasture growth is predicted to be **low** to **average** across the entire district.
- 20% of the district has burnt since January 1st.
7% has burnt since July 1st 2026.

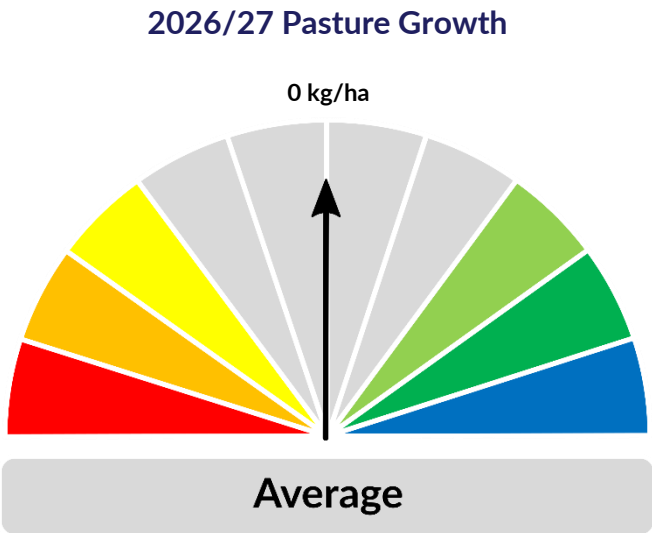


As at 1 October 2026				
(% of district)	<1,000kg/ha	1,000 - 2,000kg/ha	2,000 - 3,000kg/ha	>3,000kg/ha
2026/2027 Pasture Growth	100%	0%	0%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	37%	45%	17%	1%

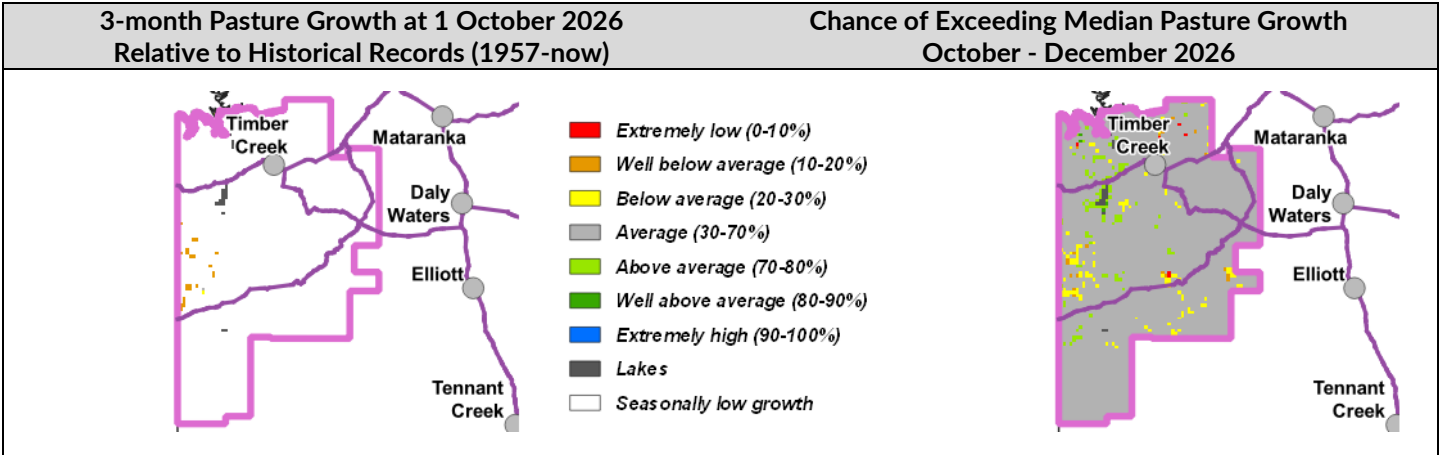
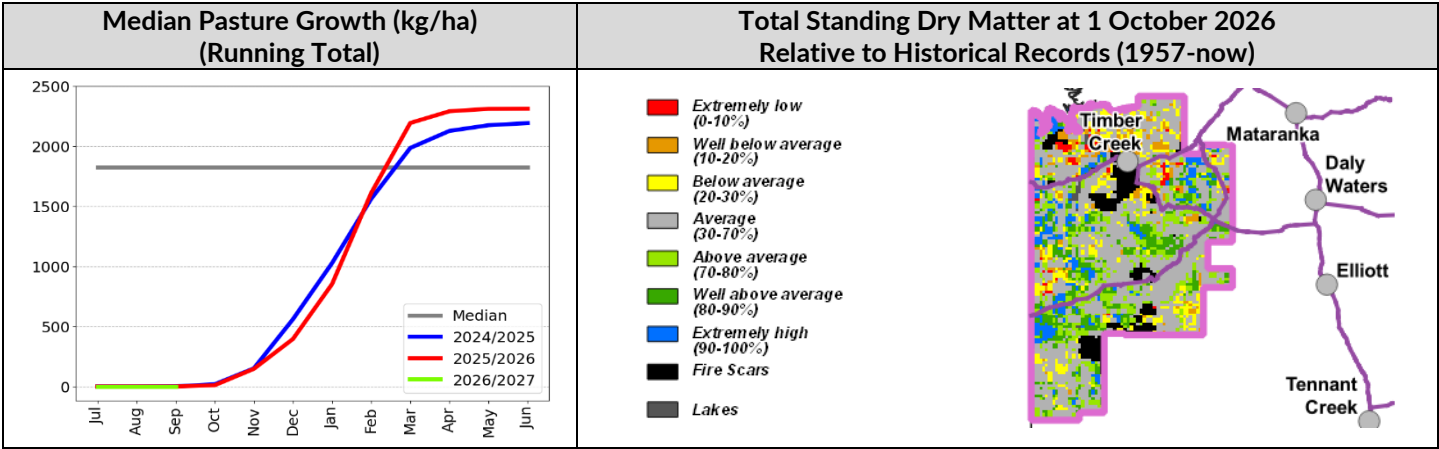


Victoria River District

- The Victoria River district is experiencing typical, seasonally low pasture growth which is considered **average** for this time of year.
- Pasture biomass levels are patchy across the district, varying from **low** where fires have removed standing dry matter, to **very high**.
- Over the next 3 months, pasture growth is likely to be **low** to **average** over much of the district, with possible scattered areas of **above average** growth.
- 13% of the district has burnt since January 1st. 6% has burnt since July 1st 2026.

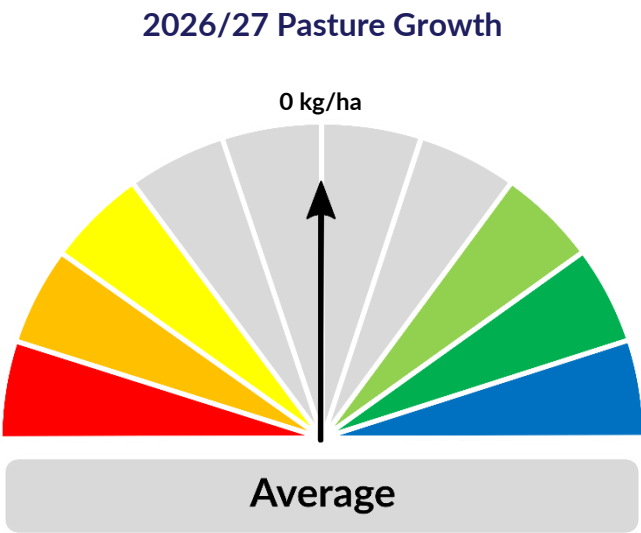


As at 1 October 2026				
(% of district)	<1,000kg/ha	1,000 - 2,000kg/ha	2,000 - 3,000kg/ha	>3,000kg/ha
2026/2027 Pasture Growth	100%	0%	0%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	8%	48%	27%	17%

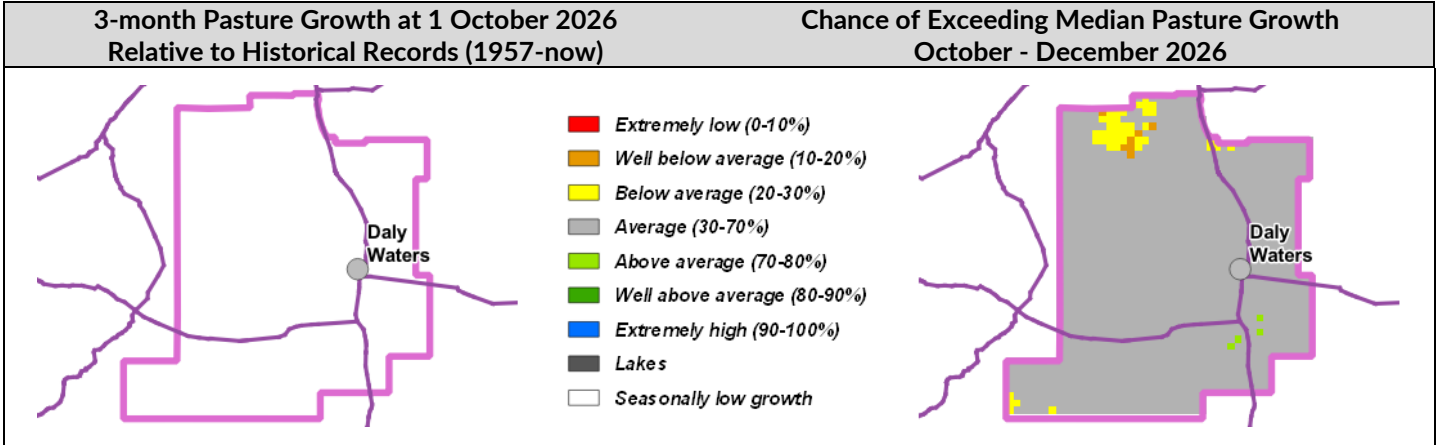
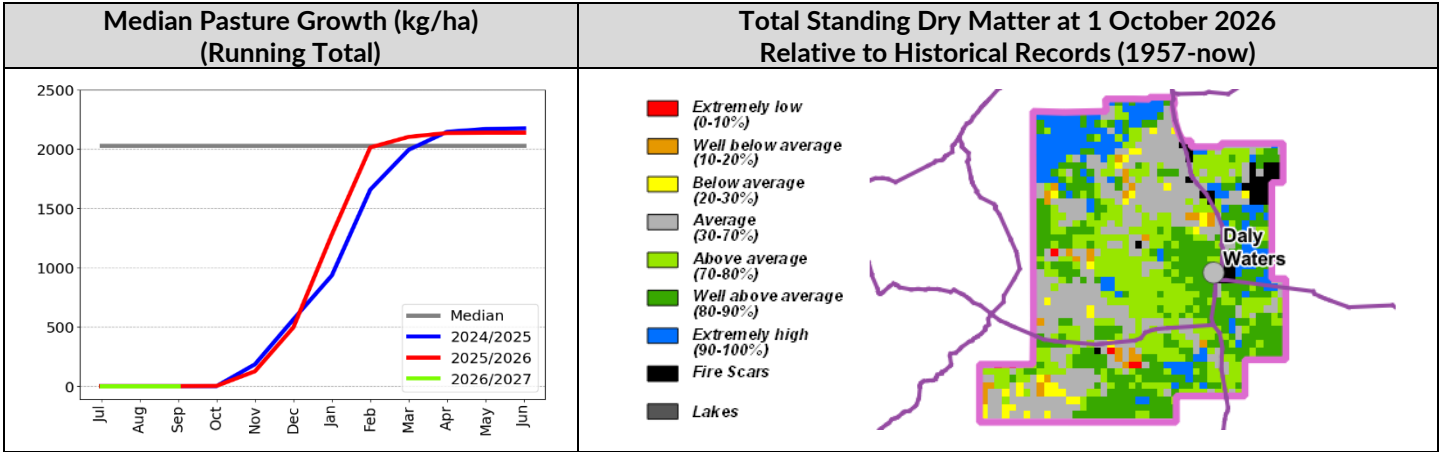


Sturt Plateau District

- The Sturt Plateau district is experiencing typical, seasonally low pasture growth over the entire district which is considered **average** for this time of year.
- Relative pasture biomass levels are generally still **average** to **very high** across most of the district.
- Over the next 3 months, pasture growth is likely to be **average** to slightly **below average** over most of the district.
- 5% of the district has burnt since January 1st. 3% has burnt since July 1st 2026.

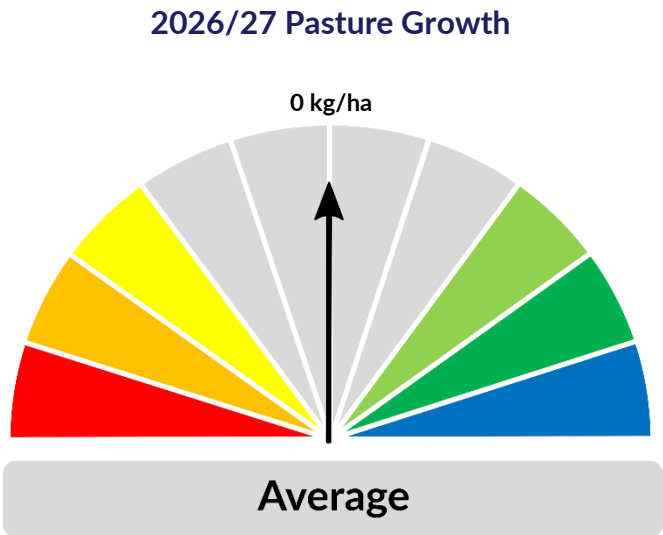


As at 1 October 2026				
(% of district)	<1,000kg/ha	1,000 - 2,000kg/ha	2,000 - 3,000kg/ha	>3,000kg/ha
2026/2027 Pasture Growth	100%	0%	0%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	6%	78%	11%	5%

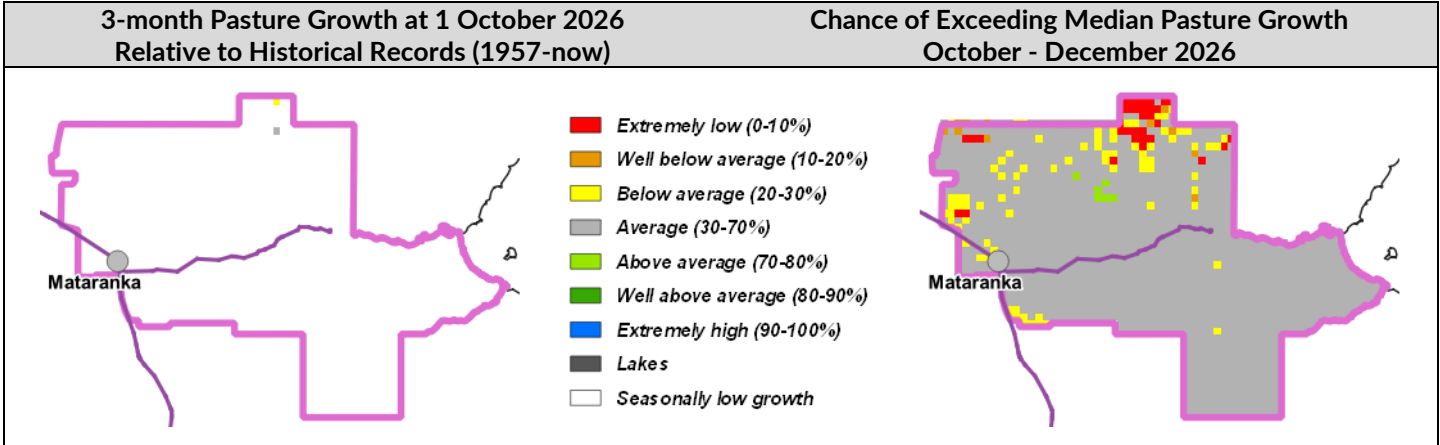
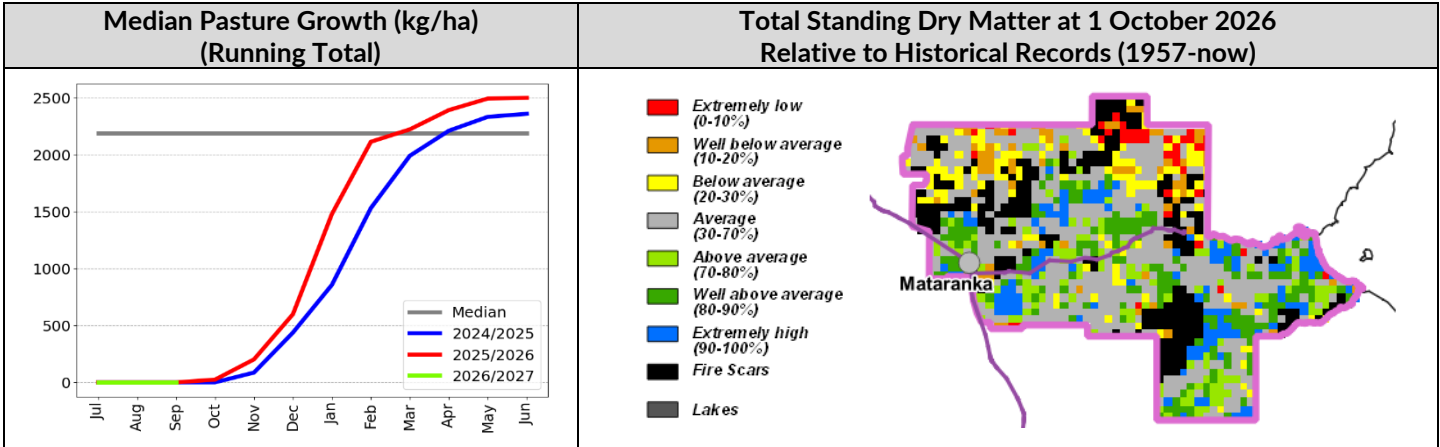


Roper District

- The Roper district is experiencing typical, seasonally low pasture growth over the entire district which is considered **average** for this time of year.
- Relative pasture biomass levels are varied & patchy ranging from **low** to **very high**. Dry season fires have also removed some large areas of standing dry matter across the district.
- Over the next 3 months, pasture growth is predicted to be generally **low** to **average** over most of the district.
- 25% of the district has burnt since January 1st. 12% has burnt since July 1st 2026.

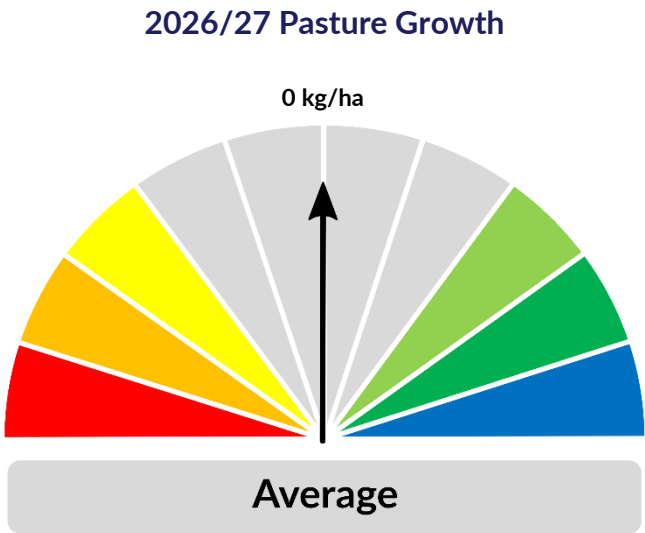


As at 1 October 2026				
(% of district)	<1,000kg/ha	1,000 - 2,000kg/ha	2,000 - 3,000kg/ha	>3,000kg/ha
2026/2027 Pasture Growth	100%	0%	0%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	17%	48%	28%	7%

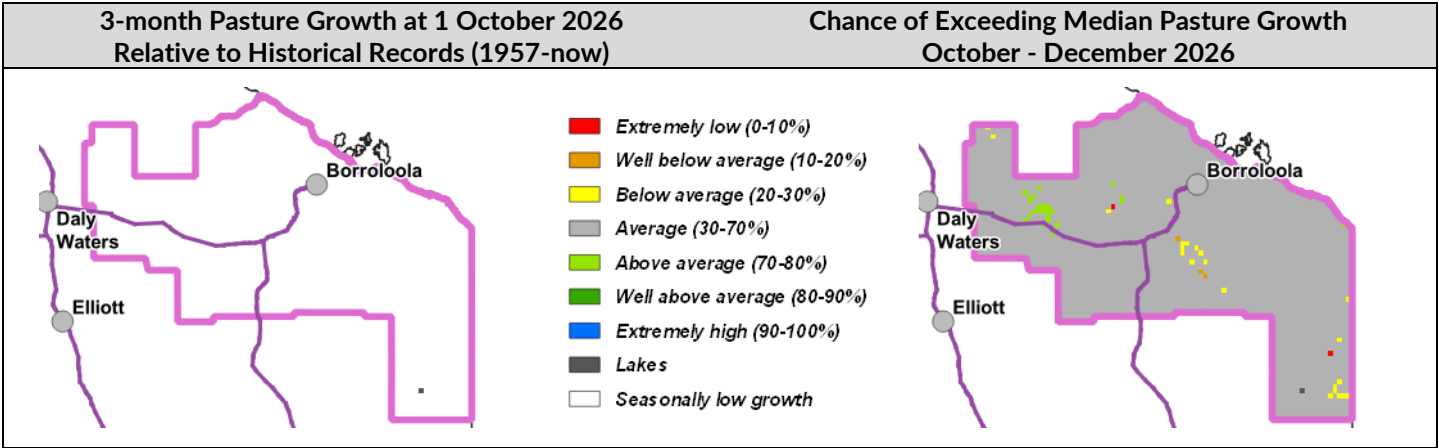
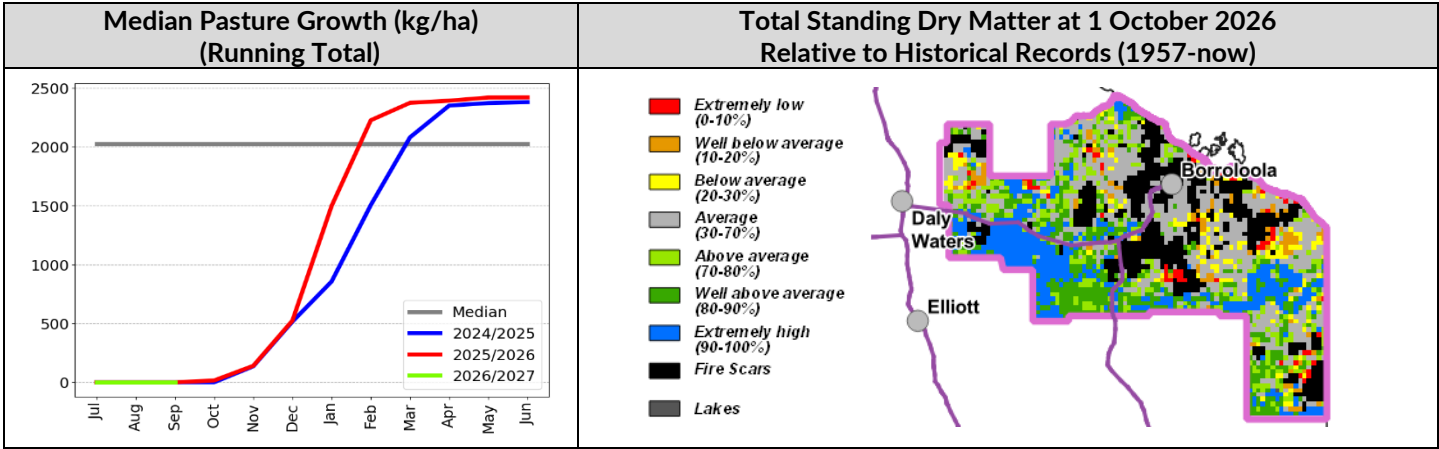


Gulf District

- The Gulf district is experiencing typical, seasonally low pasture growth over the entire district which is considered **average** for this time of year.
- Relative pasture biomass levels are varied & patchy ranging from **low** where fires have removed large areas of standing dry matter to **very high**, particularly in the western part of the district.
- Over the next 3 months, pasture growth is predicted to be generally **average** over most of the district.
- 25% of the district has burnt since January 1st. 17% has burnt since July 1st 2026.

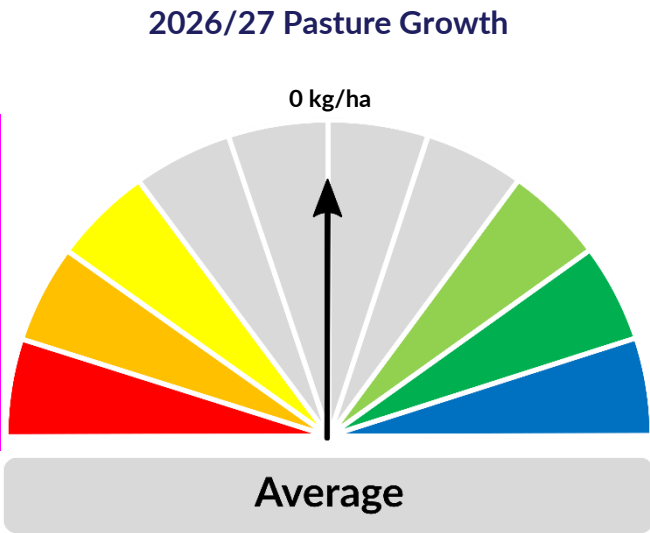


As at 1 October 2026				
(% of district)	<1,000kg/ha	1,000 - 2,000kg/ha	2,000 - 3,000kg/ha	>3,000kg/ha
2026/2027 Pasture Growth	100%	0%	0%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	15%	49%	21%	15%

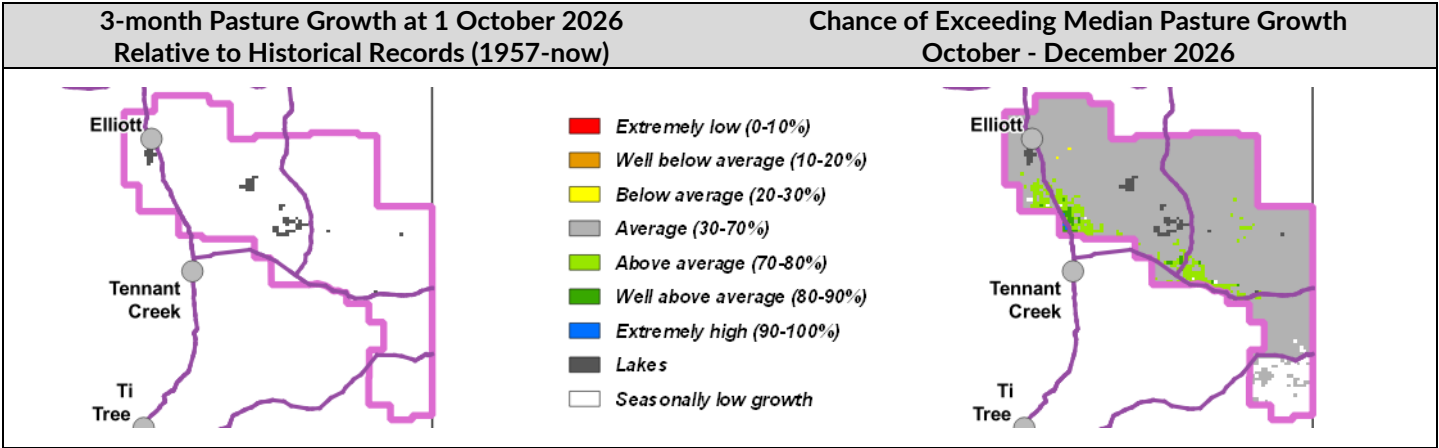
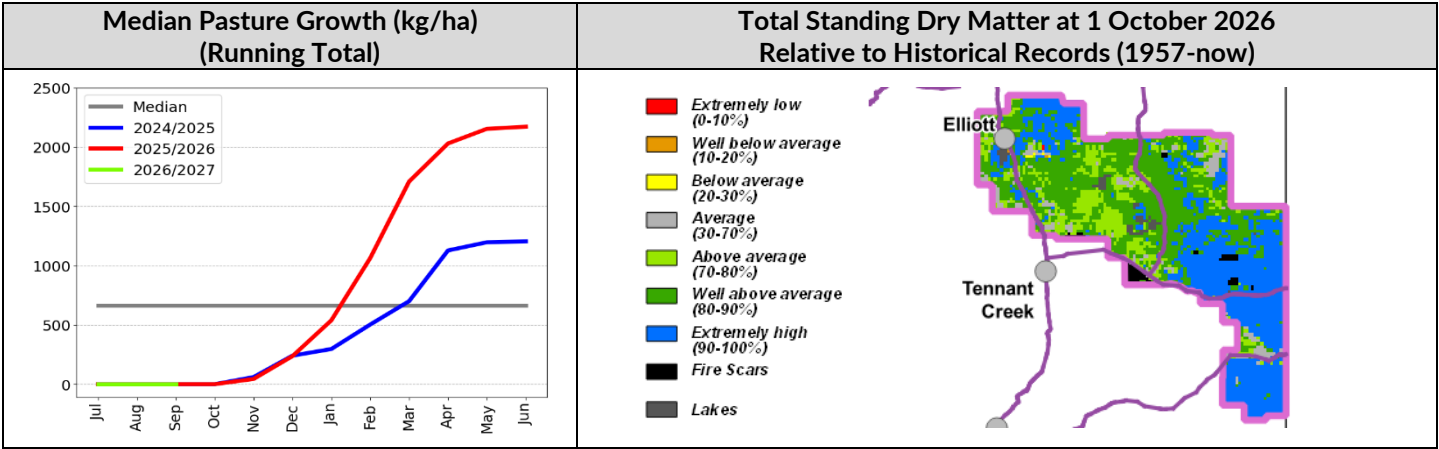


Barkly District

- The Barkly district is experiencing typical, seasonally low pasture growth over the entire district which is considered **average** for this time of year.
- Relative pasture biomass levels are still **above average** to **extremely high** over most of the district.
- Over the next 3 months, pasture growth is predicted to be generally **average** over most of the district, with some areas of **above average** growth possible along the south-west border.
- 3% of the district has burnt since January 1st.
1% has burnt since July 1st 2026.

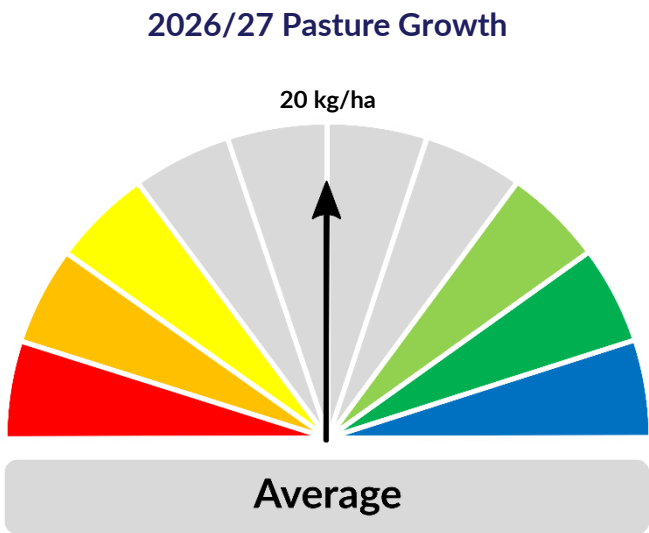


As at 1 October 2026				
(% of district)	<250kg/ha	250 – 500kg/ha	500 – 1,000kg/ha	>1,000kg/ha
2026/2027 Pasture Growth	100%	0%	0%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	<1%	1%	12%	87%

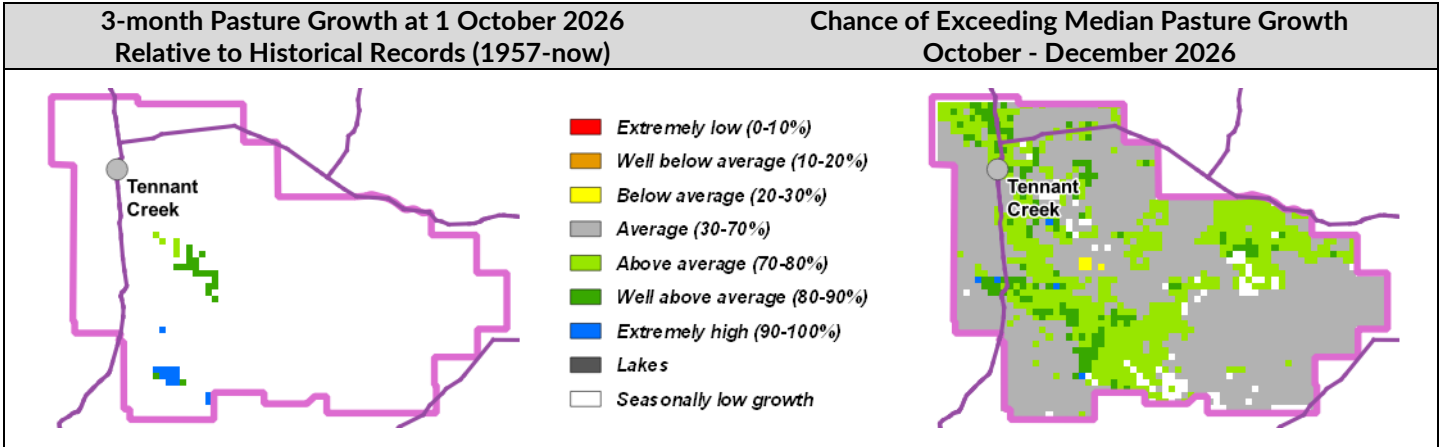
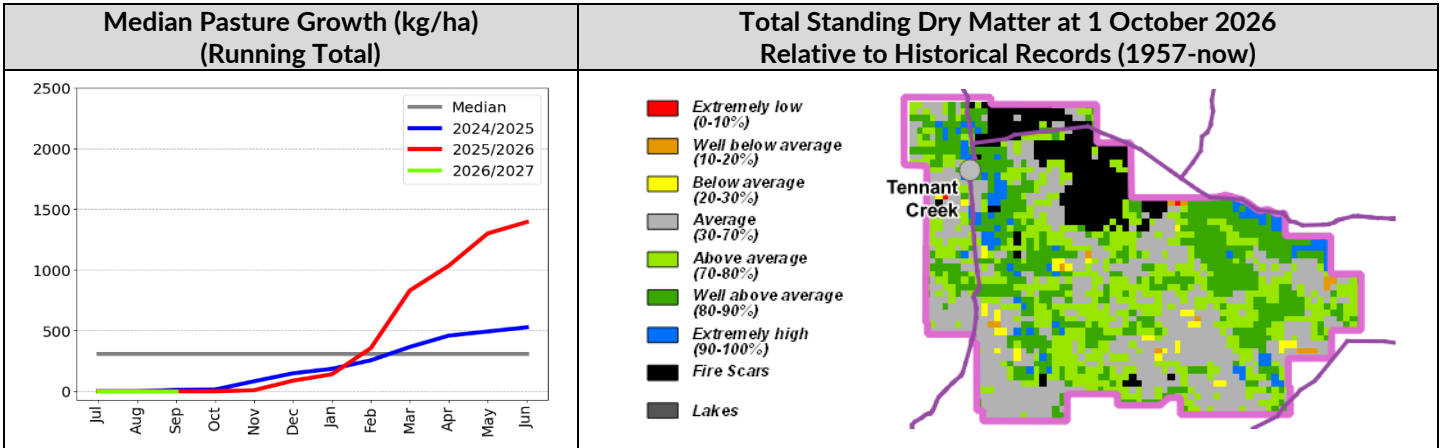


Tennant Creek District

- The Tennant Creek district is still experiencing typical, seasonally low pasture growth over most of the district, with isolated areas of **above average** to **very high** growth.
- While fires have removed large areas of standing dry matter in the north-east, relative pasture biomass levels are generally **average** to **very high** across most of the district.
- Pasture growth over the next 3 months is predicted to be generally **average** to **above average** over most of the district.
- 9% of the district has burnt since January 1st.
7% has burnt since July 1st 2026.

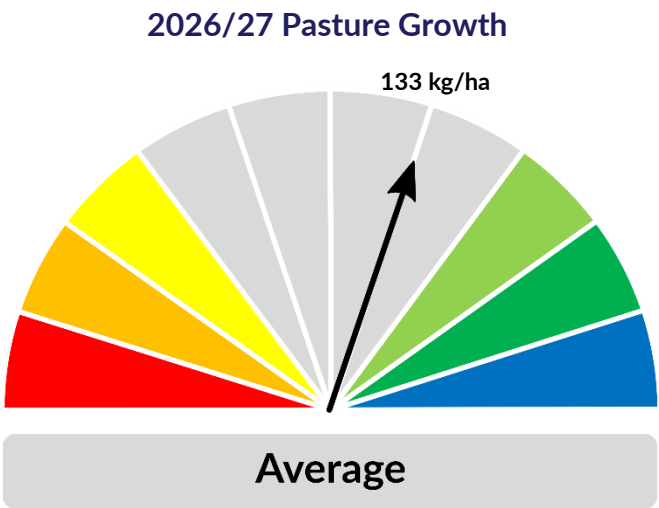


As at 1 October 2026				
(% of district)	<250kg/ha	250 – 500kg/ha	500 – 1,000kg/ha	>1,000kg/ha
2026/2027 Pasture Growth	99%	<1%	<1%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	1%	4%	17%	78%

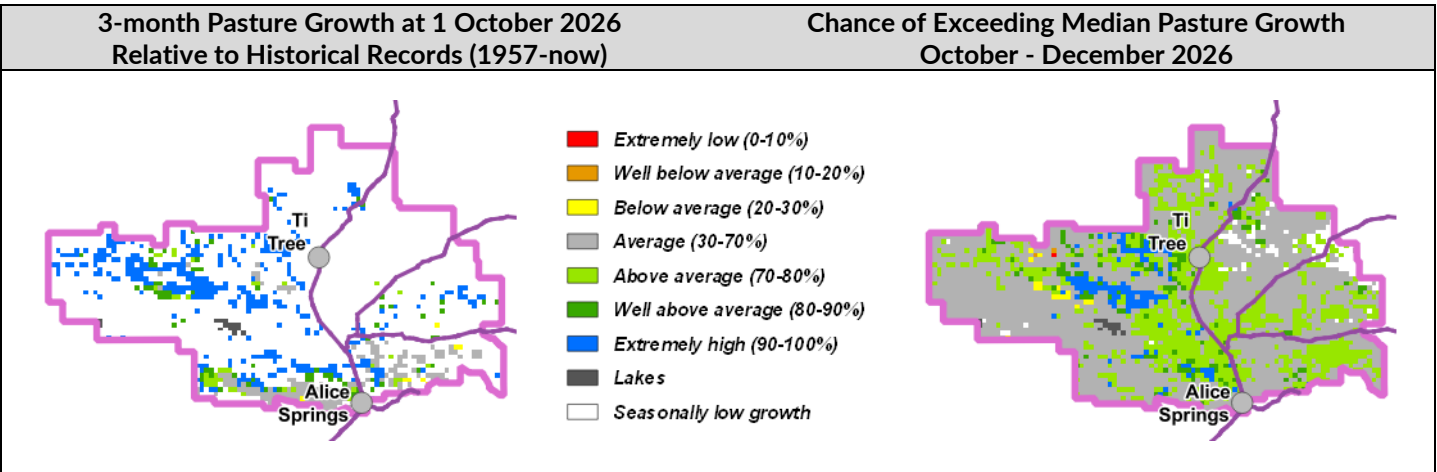
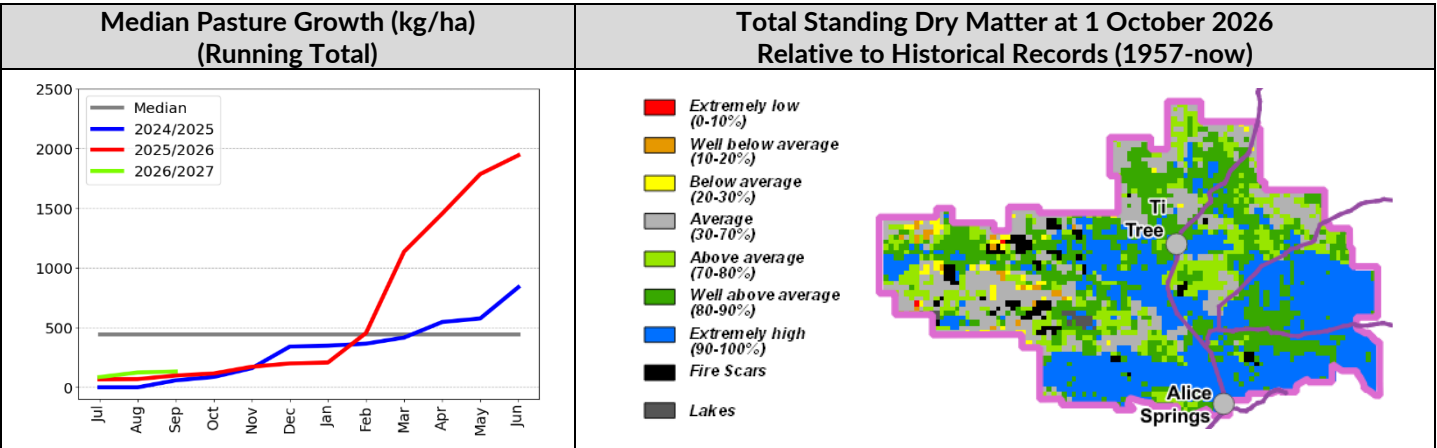


Northern Alice Springs District

- While much of the district is still experiencing seasonally low growth, the last 3 months have seen scattered areas of **very high** growth across the district.
- Relative pasture biomass levels are still **above average** to **extremely high** over much of the district, particularly across the south-east parts.
- Over the next 3 months, pasture growth is predicted to be **average** to **above average** over most of the district with scattered areas of **extremely high** growth.
- 3% of the district has burnt since January 1st.
2% has burnt since July 1st 2026.

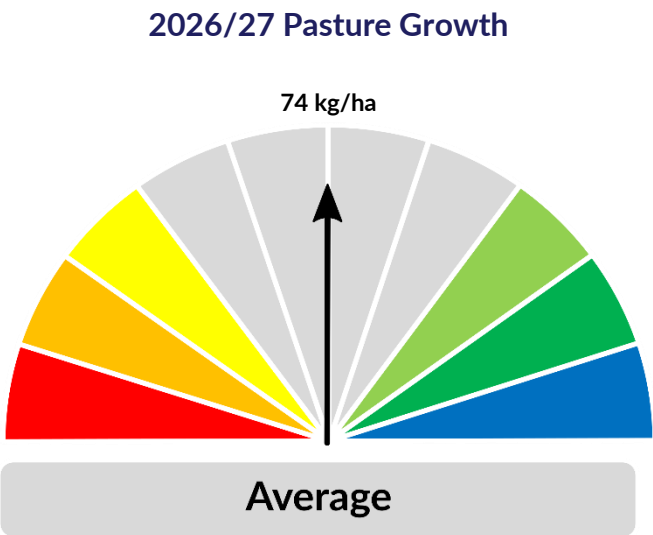


As at 1 October 2026				
(% of district)	<1000kg/ha	1000 – 1500kg/ha	1500 – 2,000kg/ha	>2,000kg/ha
2026/2027 Pasture Growth	97%	3%	0%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	4%	10%	25%	61%

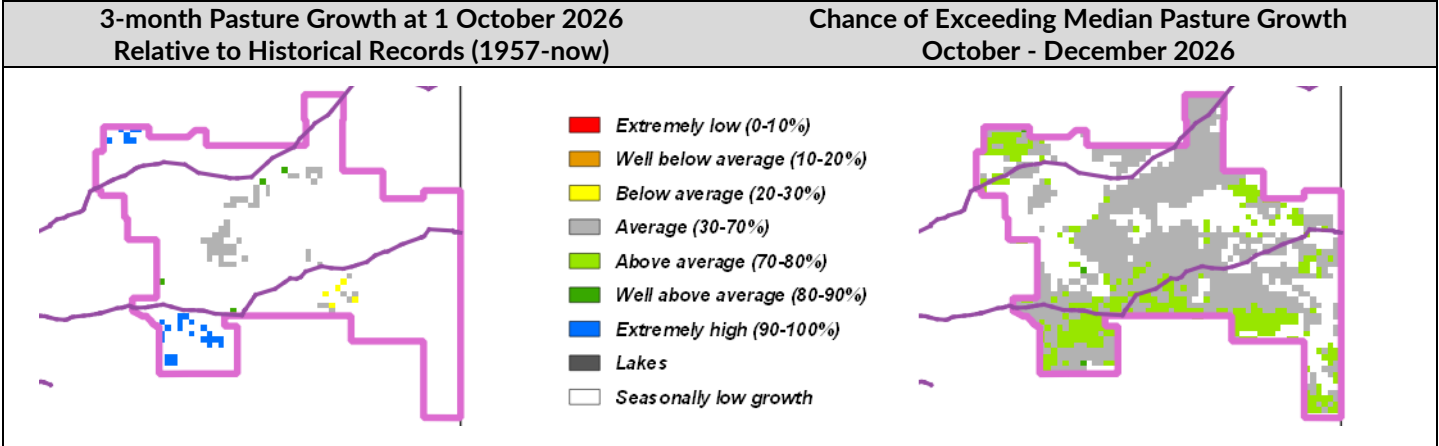
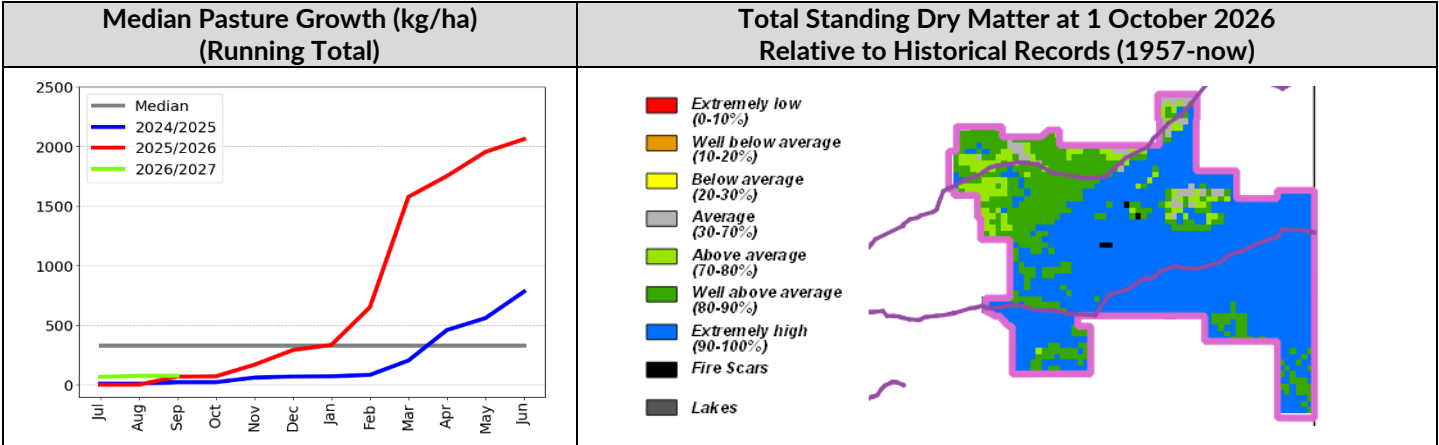


Plenty District

- While much of the district has experienced seasonally low growth over the last 3 months, there are some isolated areas of **average** to **very high** growth especially in the south of the district.
- Relative pasture biomass levels are generally **above average** to **extremely high** over most of the district.
- Over the next 3 months, pasture growth is likely to be generally **average** to **above average** over much of the district.
- Less than 1% of the district has burnt since January 1st. Less than 1% (28 km²) has burnt since July 1st 2026.



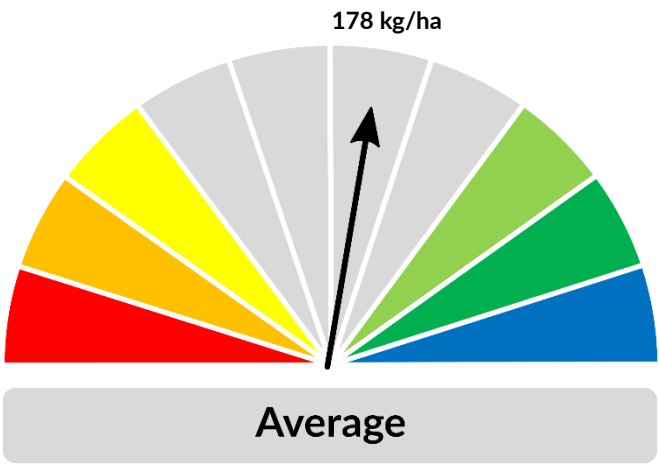
As at 1 October 2026				
(% of district)	<1000kg/ha	1000 – 1500kg/ha	1500 – 2,000kg/ha	>2,000kg/ha
2026/2027 Pasture Growth	100%	0%	0%	0%
Total Standing Dry Matter	5%	6%	22%	67%



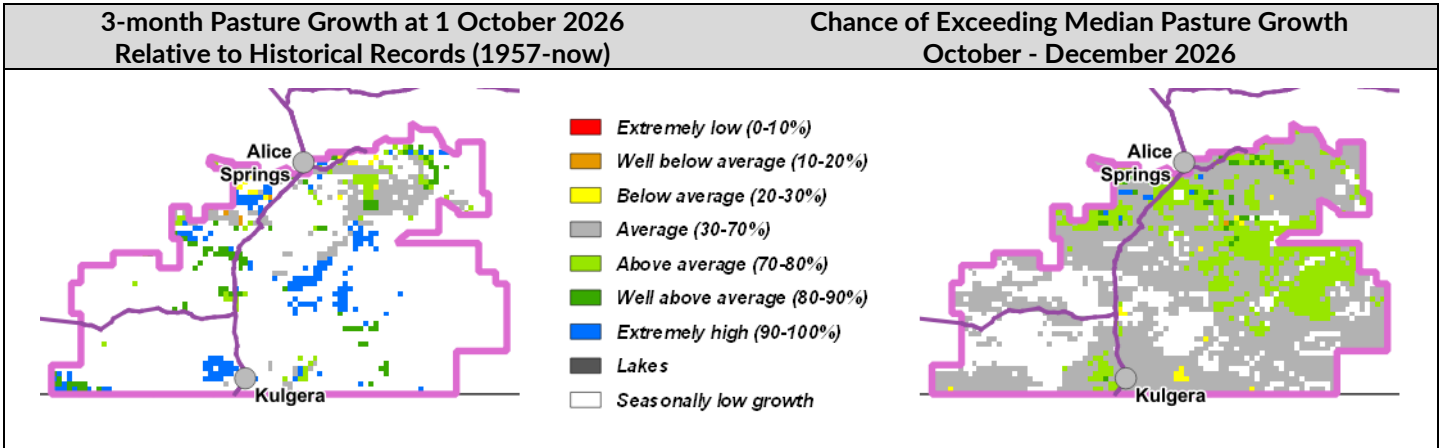
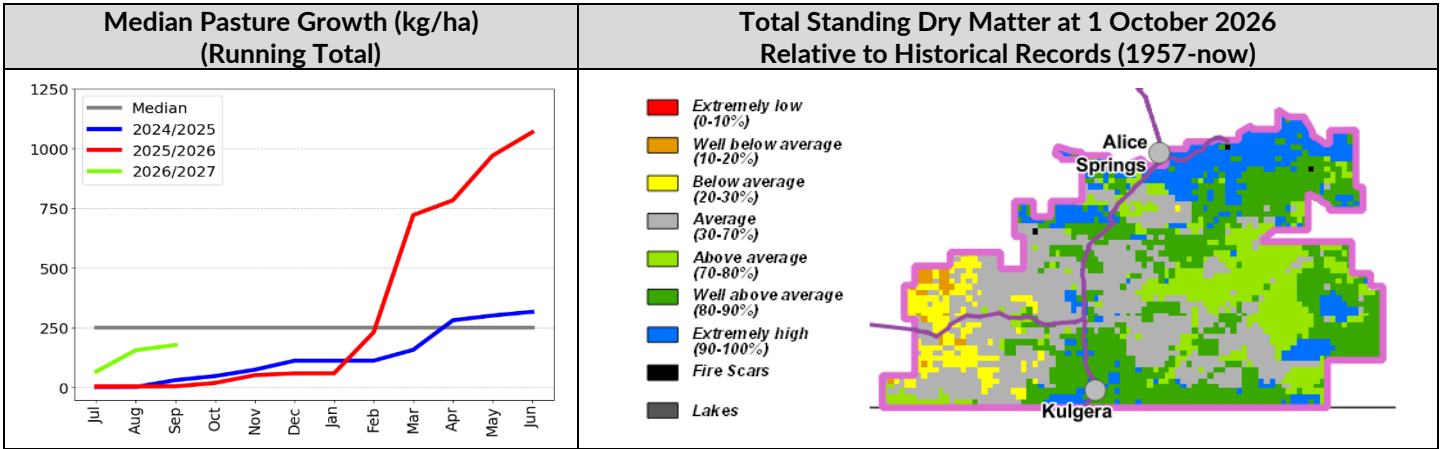
Southern Alice Springs District

- While much of the district has experienced seasonally low growth over the last 3 months, there are some isolated areas of **average** to **very high** growth across the district.
- Relative pasture biomass levels are **average** to **extremely high** over most of the district with some areas of **below average** standing dry matter in the western part of the district.
- Over the next 3 months, pasture growth is likely to be generally **average** to **above average** across much of the district.
- Less than 1% of the district has burnt since January 1st. (31 km²) has burnt since July 1st 2026.

2026/27 Pasture Growth



As at 1 October 2026				
(% of district)	<250kg/ha	250 – 500kg/ha	500 – 1,000kg/ha	>1,000kg/ha
2026/2027 Pasture Growth	59%	30%	10%	<1%
Total Standing Dry Matter	1%	9%	20%	70%



Pasture information

The pasture and grass fire risk information in this document is derived from AussieGRASS.

<https://www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au/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 not reflect local conditions.

Fire scar data used to calculate percentage of districts burnt is derived from North Australia & Rangelands Fire Information (NAFI)

<https://firenorth.org.au/nafi3/>

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