NTCA puts its case for a streamlined pastoral rents calculation system

The NTCA, which has lobbied long and hard for a simplified method of calculating pastoral land rents, has welcomed the opportunity to provide feedback to the current Economic Policy Scrutiny Committee Inquiry into the Pastoral Land Legislation Amendment Bill.

The Association has specifically advocated for the calculation method to be changed from the current Unimproved Capital Value (UCV) model to an Unimproved Carrying Capacity (UCC) model, and also for a sub-lease mechanism to be included for pastoral leases under the Non-Pastoral Use (NPU) Permits.

In its inquiry submission, the NTCA stresses that it considers the Pastoral Land Act to be effective legislation that has supported the industry and served the Territory well in the past, and will continue to do so into the future, once the amendments become law.

The submission calls for all use of the term, ‘estimated carrying capacity’, to be replaced with ‘unimproved carrying capacity’, as was agreed in the negotiations. “The specific terminology of ‘Unimproved Carrying Capacity’, or UCC, is fundamental to the changes being adopted “to simplify the calculation process and provide greater consistency and objectivity across the pastoral estate”, the NTCA says.

“The basis of the public support for the Bill was primarily around changing the pastoral rent methodology to be based on “unimproved carrying capacity” (UCC) and not “estimated carrying capacity” (ECC) as stated in the Amendment Bill. The NTCA cannot support a model based on estimated carrying capacity.

The Association says unimproved carrying capacities do not change over time, and using UCC and the pastoral land rent factor to determine pastoral rents will remove the need to conduct unnecessary, expensive and potentially contentious periodic recalculations. Using UCC also provides the stability and certainty that industry has asked to be delivered through these changes to the Pastoral Land Act.”

“The Act must state that the pastoral lease rent factor is to be the same for all pastoral leases across the NT, but the Minister may choose to waive the pastoral rent for certain districts in the event of exceptional circumstances, such as drought.”

Commenting on the draft bill, NTCA President Tom Stockwell says the proposed amendments provide simplicity and stability in calculating rents for NT pastoral businesses and will encourage investment and growth in the development of the NT cattle industry. “They provide certainty to pastoral enterprises, and provide investors with the security of tenure required to invest in diversification of the pastoral estate,” he says.

“Changing the methodology for calculating annual pastoral rent from an Unimproved Capital Value (UCV) based model to an Unimproved Carrying Capacity (UCC) model will simplify the calculation process and provide greater consistency and objectivity across the pastoral estate”

“The NTCA congratulates the Northern Territory Government for working closely with our association and pastoralists to put these amendments in place. Not only that, but the changes assist further growth and development of the pastoral industry, and therefore enhance the already significant contribution that the cattle industry makes to the Territory economy”.

Update on Live Export Class Action
The decision for the Live Export Class Action has been deferred for at least another 12 months. 
Continue reading on pg.4

Future NTCA Applications OPEN!
The NTCA are looking for a new group of future leaders for the Future NTCA 2018/19 group.
More information on pg.6

NTCA hires two new staff!
Kerrie Cokley and James Christian joined the NTCA team in mid-November and have hit the ground running!
Continue reading on pg.3
As another year in the NT cattle industry draws to a close, I am sitting in Darwin after our final Executive meeting for the year. The agenda summarised the year for NTCA:

- A briefing with Rachel Pepper, the chair of the Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing on the release of the draft report. While our call for the ability of pastoralists to veto was not recommended, just about everything else in the NTCA submission was recommended, from legislated access agreements, water and environmental benchmarks and monitoring, independent certification of well integrity, royalties for local regions, transparency, adequate compensation and consultations, legal representation and many more. (A full briefing for members will be emailed shortly).
- Productive discussions were held about the Pastoral Land Act amendments, tick lines, 1080 licencing, reports form branch Chairs, Cattle Council and NFF reps, as well as the Real Jobs Program and Indonesian Student program both of which are set to resume in 2018.
- It was the first Executive meeting for new CEO Paul Burke, and ex CEO Tracey Hayes dropped in (she couldn’t stay away) to brief the Executive on breaking news in the Live Export Class Action. Following the defence arguments in the case, the judge has now allowed a further discovery period accessing Ministerial and Departmental correspondence occurring for 12 months after the decision. While this will further delay conclusion of the case for at least 12 months, we think information uncovered during this process will really get to the truth of the matter and strengthen the industry’s case. It continues to be supported by the Australian Farmer’s Fighting Fund. (The Association has retained Tracey to handle the Class Action and the Land Access Arrangements Review.)


The draft final report from the Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing in the Northern Territory was released during the week and contained a raft of recommendations which positively addressed the NTCA submission. Recommendations covered the need to:

- Benchmark and monitor water quality, and for regional groundwater models to be developed before production starts;
- Be subject to the Water Act;
- Negotiate legislated land access agreements with pastoralists who will have legal advice funded, and
  - agreements must contain minimum protections for pastoralists.
  - Government to consider implementing a mandatory minimum compensation scheme for pastoralists;
  - Government to consider whether a royalty payment scheme should be implemented to compensate pastoral lessees for all new petroleum fields brought into production;
- Construct wells to a strict quality code which will be tested, accredited and monitored by an independent agency;
- Pay a levy to cover monitoring of abandoned wells into the foreseeable future;
- Have a distance of at least 2km between well heads and maintain separation from homesteads, bores and other infrastructure;
- Consider royalty revenue for regions that are the source of taxation revenue from shale gas extraction.

There were over 100 recommendations and a briefing via telephone with Inquiry Chair Justice Rachel Pepper allowed the NTCA to clarify areas of concern. The NTCA was encouraged to provide the Inquiry with more information on areas of interest and concern. A sub-committee of the Board has been formed to co-ordinate a response to the draft and members will be asked to provide feedback over the holiday period. The response is due back to the Inquiry by mid-January.

There will be a further consultation round with the Inquiry Panel in 2018. The NTCA is seeking as much input from members as possible. Please contact the Darwin office for more information.


The next round of public hearings will take place in February:
- Darwin: 5 & 6 February
- Katherine: 7 February
- Alice Springs: 8 February
- Tennant Creek: 12 February

More information can be found on the Inquiry website: https://frackinginquiry.nt.gov.au
In her first month in the job Kerrie has covered many hundreds of bush kilometres visiting host stations and Indigenous communities and interviewing prospective candidates for program vacancies in 2018.

**Kerrie Cokley takes up the Real Jobs Program reins**

New NTCA Real Jobs Program (RJP) Senior Field Officer, Kerrie Cokley, says she’s fired up and ready to hit the road in earnest after taking up the role in Katherine in November. The Queensland-born horse woman has spent the past 10 years in the Katherine region where she’s worked on several stations, at the Top Saddlery and been a horse and cattle lecturer at CDU’s Katherine Rural Campus. As part of her teaching role, she’s already worked with RJP recruits over the past seven years, as well as providing horsemanship training to visiting Indonesian students, so has had a good introduction to NTCA programs. She’s also presented at the recent three-day regional RJP forum, along with her predecessor Tara Craigie and latest RJP graduate, Jamahl ‘Marlee’ Ned, who she hopes will be aiming to become a head stockman on VRD station. Kerrie used the ILC-sponsored forum to promote the success and benefits of the NTCA initiative that has opened up valuable training and workplace opportunities for young Indigenous people wanting to work in the cattle industry.

“We were really pleased to have Jamahl with us to talk at the forum and he did well. He is gaining great leadership and mentoring abilities, is a good role model for the younger fellas and will help with mentoring the 1st Year employees to the program.”

Kerrie says there’s no shortage of interest again this year and the recruitment is going well. “Community visits, school information sessions and interviews will be continuing into 2018. The program gets underway in early March with the highly popular pre-employment training block at the Bohning Yard facility in Alice Springs. This coming year we have 15 contracted positions for the program and a swag of trainees will be returning in 2018 for their second year but there’s still a few spaces left to fill.”

One of Kerrie’s goals in the job is to get more young Indigenous women interested in pastoral careers, and she has interviewed two so far for consideration for the 2018 program.

To get in touch with Kerrie, email: northern.pastoral@ntca.org.au

**James Christian – Looking after business in the bush**

Former Sydney-sider James Christian has joined the NTCA in its newest position of Business Development Officer (Innovation), working from the Bohning Yards office south of Alice Springs. Thanks to his Sydney upbringing, James is a rugby union fanatic (‘I coach much better than I play’) and has crewed in seven Sydney-to-Hobart yacht races, but has since become hooked on station life in Central Australia. He first arrived in 2006 for a two-week school holiday stint as a ringer on Napperby Station, loved the life and kept coming back and staying longer. “I found it fascinating and completely different to Sydney,” he says.

In 2012, James joined Tim Driver at Precision Pastoral and helped design and develop the venture’s innovative walk-over weighing system and other devices. He later returned to Napperby where he and cousin, Sam Chisholm, have since established their own cattle herd.

James has also completed studies for a Master of Business Administration, which he’ll be putting to good use in his new NTCA job.

“I’ll be working with, and building links between, pastoralists, the DPIR and MLA to assess what research is needed, what’s being done and what already exists in terms of methods, equipment and the like, which could be picked up by industry,” he says.

“I’ll be coordinating field days and information sessions and gathering ideas for future industry-related research trials.” He says a key focus will be to encourage industry uptake of the valuable knowledge already available from research initiatives. “As an example, Katherine Research Station has developed a Brahman herd with incredibly superior genetics, which could lead to significant commercial benefits for industry players.”

James doesn’t see himself leaving Central Australia anytime soon. “I like the wide-open spaces, camping in swags, not having neighbours poking their heads over the fence, and the whole relaxed feel about life up here,” he says. “It’s the way people in the bush get on with job, get along so well together and willingly give you a hand if needed. There’s no ‘Them and Us’ in the bush.”

**RECENT NTCA STAFF CHANGES**

**Tara Craigie (former RJP Senior Field Officer), Jamahl Ned (RJP participant) and Kerrie Cokley (NTCA’s new RJP Senior Field Officer) presenting details of the program at a forum session in Darwin.**

**Northern Pastoral E-mail:**

northern.pastoral@ntca.org.au

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**NTCA OFFICE CHRISTMAS HOURS**

The NTCA Darwin office will be closed from the 22nd of December and will re-open on the 3rd of January.

The office phone will be diverted to a mobile, please call 08 8981 5976 with urgent enquiries.
CEO UPDATE

As 2017 winds down, the NTCA and our members can reflect on what has been another big year for the northern pastoral industry. So much has been achieved this year and there’s so much more still on the horizon. Reflecting on the year behind us, the NTCA has been able to progress many of the key priorities identified by members. The Pastoral Land Act Reform Bill had its first reading in Parliament. The NTCA congratulates the Northern Territory Government for taking up the challenge, creating a framework that simplifies land rent calculations and allows for sub-leasing on the pastoral estate to give our industry the opportunity to diversify. We will continue to work with Government to ensure these changes are realised.

The Live Export Class Action will continue throughout 2018. The work Tracey Hayes and the NTCA has done to keep this important case moving forward on behalf of the entire live export supply chain has been monumental. The case still has a long way to run, but we continue to ensure that it is well resourced through the Australian Fighting Farmers Fund.

Volumetric Loading is inching towards a resolution and I met with the Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics, Nicole Manison to discuss this recently. This is an important reform and we will continue to work with Government to achieve a positive outcome early in 2018.

The year ahead will see the Northern Territory Government with some important decisions to make. The first will be the decision on Shale Gas Exploration and Extraction. This decision will no doubt be a contentious and divisive one for many Territorians. The NTCA have lobbied hard to ensure that land access agreements are legislated and based on world’s best practice. We will continue to be engaged in this process and will circulate more detailed information to all members in the coming days.

The NTCA working closely with members and the Government on water policy and vegetation management. Both of these areas will undergo a review in 2018 and will be strongly advocating on behalf of our members to ensure sensible reform is achieved. Reform in these areas needs to consider pastoralists’ aspirational development goals, but also allow for land to be managed without unnecessary impediments. These will all be topics at our next round of Branch Meetings in February 2018.

The NTCA’s 34th Annual Conference will be held in Alice Springs on the 22nd and 23rd March 2018. The theme is ‘Innovation Generation’ and there’ll be a great line-up of speakers to challenge your thinking. I look forward to meeting many of you at the Conference.

On behalf of all at the NTCA I would like to wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas - ideally with just the right amounts of rain at the right time.

Regards
Paul Burke
CEO

Live Export Class Action UPDATE

After a case management hearing earlier this month and a strong liability hearing earlier in the year, MinterEllison is now preparing the quantum case, detailing the losses incurred by the group. This includes a ‘but for’ the ban calculation and a detailed ‘counter-factual’ which effectively rebuilds the industry post June 2011, replacing ESCAS, with a similar system but without the urgent audit and compliance issues.

The matter is set down for a three week trial in December 2018, where the judge will hear evidence about the extent of the loss suffered by group members. This will involve collecting evidence from those who were working in the cattle industry both here and in Indonesia in 2011 and reviewing critical and newly ordered documents discovered from the Commonwealth.

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Preparations are well in hand for the 2018 NTCA Annual Conference, to be staged at the Alice Springs Convention Centre on 22-33 March, and the NTCA are hoping for another record-breaking success with more than 450 delegates expected to attend.

“It’s all coming together well,” NTCA executive officer Tom Ryan says. “There’s been a good uptake on sponsorships, and we’re in the process of bringing together a top-class line-up of speakers, among them our keynote speaker Sir Angus Houston who has already confirmed his attendance and will speak to delegates about aviation safety in the cattle industry.”

The program for the 34th industry conference will focus on the theme, Innovation Generation, and offer another hard-hitting full-day forum of invigorating speaker presentations and panel sessions, as well as the ever-popular Northern Stock Water Ladies Lunch, the Pioneer Water Tanks Welcome Drinks and the AACo Gala Dinner to end the two-day event. The NTCA Amateur Photography Competition has become one of the most anticipated highlights of the conference program and this year’s 9th annual competition will maintain that momentum. A change in 2018 means participants will no longer have to print their entries. All photos can now be submitted electronically via Dropbox or USB and will be printed by the NTCA for display during the Conference. The competition is open to all NTCA full members, associate members AND their employees – and the winners will be announced at the Gala Dinner on Friday 23 March.

Intending delegates are being urged to get in early with registrations and to book their accommodation, which is guaranteed to book out.

TICKETS FOR THE CONFERENCE & GALA DINNER ARE ON SALE NOW!
Follow the link on the NT Cattlemen’s Association website to register: www.ntca.org.au

INTRODUCING...2018 Keynote Speaker: Sir Angus Houston

Air Chief Marshal Sir Angus Houston AK, AFC (Retired) was awarded the Knight of the Order of Australia in January 2015 for extraordinary and pre-eminent achievement and merit in service to Australia, through distinguished service in the Australian Defence Force, continued commitment to serve the nation in leadership roles, particularly the national responses to the MH370 and MH17 disasters, and in a variety of roles in the community.

Sir Angus retired from the military in July 2011 after serving for 41 years. He was Chief of the Australian Defence Force from 2005-2011 and prior to that was Chief of Air Force for four years. From 2011-2013, he was Chair of the Anzac Centenary Advisory Board which provided strategic advice to the Australian Government on planning and implementation of the Anzac Centenary. Sir Angus also chairs a number of boards and is a board member for many organisations.

At the NTCA’s 34th Annual Industry Conference in March, Sir Angus will speak on the critical topic of aviation safety within the cattle industry, his experience with influencing cultural change in the Australian Air Force, and how this may apply to bush aviation.

The Alward Foster Memorial - Emerging Indigenous Pastoral Leader Award 2018

Nominations are now open for the 2018 Alward Foster Memorial - Emerging Indigenous Pastoral Leader Award. The inaugural award was won in 2017 by Stewart Foster, and in 2018 will again recognise an emerging Indigenous leader who espoused the attributes of the Indigenous Stockmen and Women who contributed to the pioneering of the Northern Territory Pastoral Sector.

The award is proudly sponsored by the Warriner Family and the winner will be presented at the Conference with a custom-made saddle from the Top Saddlery Bush Boutique.

Entry forms are available from the NTCA Darwin office: office.darwin@ntca.org.au
Red Meat the focus at national forum in Alice Springs

The 2017 Meat & Livestock Australia Red Meat Industry Forum, built on the theme, Fostering Prosperity, enticed a strong roll-up of participants from throughout Australia to the Alice Springs Convention Centre on 21-22 November.

This premier event on the Australian red meat industry’s calendar featured a full program of activities including a trade show; updates on research, innovation and marketing initiatives; a business breakfast, evening reception, workshops and networking opportunities. More than 200 guests heard from a diverse line-up of speakers from across the red meat and livestock industry, including MLA General Managers who presented insights into opportunities for producers and information on how MLA is investing to foster the prosperity of the industry.

A program highlight was the Producer Tour to the Alice Springs district’s Undoolya Station where owners Nicole and Ben Hayes and family hosted 200 guests for a guided look around their successful cattle operation. Guests were able to observe and discuss station innovations including modern new yards and the new walk-through weighing facility which has significantly streamlined the cattle handling process on Undoolya.

A group of the current Future NTCA participants joined other delegates at the Red Meat forum, travelling in from their respective regions to engage in the two-day program, attend the MLA Annual General Meeting held in conjunction with the forum, and gain valuable production, marketing and research insights from leaders in Australian red meat sector. (See Rachael Connell’s forum wrap-up below)

What the MLA forum meant for Rachael and her fellow Future NTCA

Future NTCA member Rachael Connell travelled in from Brunette Downs Station to attend the MLA Red Meat Forum and, on behalf of the group, shares some thoughts about this major industry event:

“On a personal note, I found Anna Speer and Dr Michelle Allen inspiring speakers. Anna spoke about her personal life and how she got where she and it was easy to resonate with her story. I was thrilled that Dr Allen took 15 minutes out of her extremely busy schedule to sit down and have a yarn to a few of the Future NTCA team and Tom. She’s an extremely positive person and has her fingers in SO many pies. I just couldn’t comprehend how diverse her life was from week to week and how she flicked her train of thought from topic to topic.

“The MLA forum and panel sessions definitely opened our eyes to issues in other areas of Australia and the nation’s red meat industry. It’s easy to forget there is a world outside of the NT and the property or area of work you work in.”

NTCA Now Recruiting for Future NTCA 2018/19 Group!

The Future NTCA program for young rural Territorians with aspirations to lead and strengthen the pastoral industry moves into its fourth year in 2018-19, with applications for the latest group of candidates being called for now! Places in the program are offered to people aged 18-35, who are currently involved in, or are closely connected to the Territory cattle industry, and who are passionate about making a solid contribution to, and becoming a future leader of the industry.

The NTCA initiative was launched in 2014 to identify and develop leadership skills within the Northern Territory beef industry’s next generation of leaders, and has attracted regional participants with wide-ranging skills and from diverse backgrounds.

The NTCA says the program has been successful in optimising the potential of the industry’s youth, capturing new ideas, networking and injecting renewed enthusiasm.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Visit: www.ntca.org.au or call the NTCA Office – 08 8981 5976
CENTRAL AUSTRALIAN PASTORAL PIONEER

Bob Savage, who passed away in late 2016, was a true pastoral pioneer. Born in the late 19th century, Bob Savage played a significant role in the development of cattle industry in Central Australia.

Savage was a horseman and cattle producer, described by his family as a top Queensland horseman. In 1948 while on a trip to Alice Springs, he and his wife Lillian set up the pastoral lease Suplejack Downs.

Bob Savage and his family were the first European settlers in the area, establishing a cattle station at Suplejack Downs. The Savage family went on to become one of the most respected cattle families in Central Australia.

In 1951, Bob and Lillian Savage moved to the cattle station and started a successful cattle operation. They eventually negotiated a pastoral lease for the land, and drove back out from Alice Springs in an old Bedford truck with Lillian in the front and his children in the back, on a three-day journey along the then severely rugged and overgrown Tanami Track to begin cattle production in earnest.

Suplejack Downs has since been home to four generations of Bob and Lillian’s family. Bob leaves behind six children, 22 grandchildren, and 49 great-grandchildren. Bob’s daughter Letty, her husband Bill Cook and a number of his grandchildren continue to live and work on Suplejack Downs.

The NTCA extends its condolences to the families of Bob Savage and Ted Hart on the passing of these two much-loved and respected cattle industry identities.

BOB SAVAGE

Bob Savage died on 15 December before being laid to rest at his beloved Suplejack Downs Station on the edge of the Tanami Desert.

In an ABC radio interview a few years ago, Bob Savage talked about discovering the land that became Suplejack Downs 60 years ago, when his car broke down 730 kilometres northwest of Alice Springs while on a trip back from Western Australia.

He told the ABC’s Caddie Brain: "I saw that land and I couldn’t believe that there was any good country in that area. But I’ve proven since that there was and there is.”

Upgrade works well advanced at Berrimah cattle export yards

The $4.1 million upgrade to the Berrimah cattle export facility is now well advanced with the impressive undercover areas completed and other works proceeding well. 

Minister for Primary Industry & Resources, Ken Vowles, says the upgraded facility will better position Darwin as the supply base of choice for live cattle and buffalo export.

He commended local welding, construction and fencing contractors, associated tradesmen and other service providers involved for the high quality of workmanship completed so far, saying their achievements demonstrated the capabilities of Territory businesses.

“These upgrades are not only creating jobs during the construction phase, but will also support the live export industry to grow and expand, creating further jobs,” the Minister says. They’ve provided an important economic stimulus and jobs and, once finished, the Territory will have a world-class live export facility to support one of our major economic drivers.”

The upgrade is expected to be completed by February 2018.

New NT reps add their voices to CCA consultative committees

Four new Northern Territory cattle industry representatives are now adding their experience to the consultative sub-committees that drive the Cattle Council of Australia’s policy development process.

CCA has four consultative sub-committees made up of volunteer CCA members from throughout Australia who provide policy advice to assist the council to develop producer-focused policy. The incoming Territory reps and the sub-committees they sit on are:

- BRIAN RADUNZ - Animal Health, Welfare, Biosecurity and Environment (AHW & B)
- TRUDI OXLEY - Research, Development and Adoption (RD&A)
- MARKUS RATHSMANN - Marketing, Market Access and Trade (MMAT)
- STEVE POCOCK - Industry Systems and Food Safety (ISFS)

The committees meet regularly via teleconference and four times a year in-person and play an important role in CCA’s policy decisions that inform the broader industry. The CCA invites expressions of interest from willing new committee members each September prior to its AGM.

Review of Cattle Tick Management Program underway

The NT Department of Primary Industry and Resources (DPIR) is reviewing the Cattle Tick Management Program it delivers in cooperation with the cattle industry and other livestock interests. The program, run under the Livestock Act and Regulations, aims to minimise the cost of cattle tick and tick fever in the Territory.

A review is currently being undertaken to ensure that an effective, risk-based, practical and financially viable program is maintained for the management of cattle tick based on clear and simple regulation, sound technical evidence, and appropriate resource allocation through consultation with the relevant livestock industries and other stakeholders.

The review’s four key focus issues are:

- Zoning - Which Cattle Tick Zones are required for effective management and whether the Parkhurst Zone and/or the Control Zone are needed
- Inspections and treatment for different species - Whether high-risk species such as cattle and buffalo can have a different inspection and/or treatment for cattle tick compared to other low-risk species such as horses?
- Delivery of services for regulated movement restrictions - Who is the most appropriate person to undertake the cattle tick inspection and treatment function (government inspector, third party inspector or livestock owner) and for which species?
- Cattle Tick Program funding - How should the cattle tick inspection function be funded (partial cost recovery, full cost recovery, industry levy)?

Cattle ticks were introduced into the Territory through Darwin in the 1880s and eventually spread through cattle movements across the Gulf, VRD and Barkly region stock routes.

NTCA executive officer Tom Ryan says the tick management review has been considered by members of all four NTCA branches, resulting in unanimous support for maintaining the status quo.

“However, the Top End branch would like to see testing done to determine precisely where Parkhurst tick actually sits so the line can be moved accordingly,” he says.
Helping to strengthen our northern disease surveillance systems

By Jess Rummary, Livestock Biosecurity Network

LBN’s Biosecurity and Extension Manager for Northern Australia, Jess Rummary, urges pastoralists to be aware of the following disease surveillance programs and how they can help to detect and report exotic diseases that can significantly impact on Australia’s primary industry sector.

**Bucks for Brains** – is a national program providing a monetary incentive ($300 per animal) to producers who submit a brain for testing. Brains submitted must be from animals displaying select clinical signs such as muscle tremors, poor co-ordination, paralysis or abnormal posture. Further information on this program and the criteria for livestock to be submitted can be found on the Animal Health Australia website.

**Screw Worm Fly** – Surveillance for this pest is unique to northern Australia and involves fly trapping and samples submitted by livestock owners across the northern parts of the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia. The fly is currently not present in Australia but if it did establish here it would have major impacts on northern livestock production and the live export trade. For more information on screw worm fly surveillance, how to take a sample and where to send the samples please see the Animal Health Australia website or contact your relevant state or territory agricultural department or local vet.

**The National Arbovirus Motoring Program (NAMP)** - monitors the presence of arbovirus diseases, including bluetongue virus. Some serotypes of bluetongue virus are present in Australia, but we are fortunate to not have the type that causes clinical disease. This surveillance program involves testing of specific herds at set locations, and trapping and monitoring the insects that spread the disease. This program is important to monitor the serotypes present and to keep accurate zoning maps to maintain market access to bluetongue sensitive markets. Testing is selected based on specific locations that meet the criteria so participation in this program is usually through invitation by the state or federal departments. If you are approached to participate in NAMP, I strongly encourage you to do so.

Generally, it is critical to investigate any unusual signs of diseases or deaths in your livestock. Assistance in the cost of disease investigations is available. You can contact your state or territory agriculture department for more details on what assistance or compensation is available to you in the unlikely event of a significant disease detection. If you suspect you have a notifiable disease or something unusual on your property, you should call your local vet or stock inspector as soon as possible. Alternatively you can contact the 24-hour emergency animal disease hotline on 1800 675 888.

If you would like information on any other biosecurity or surveillance topic, please send through your suggestions to jrummary@lbn.org.au and we will do our best to answer these in future LBN newsletter articles.
CLIMATE WATCH

Near average wet season to date for the Northern Territory

The first two months of the dry season have been mostly above average in terms of rainfall across the NT (see figure 1), off the back of a drier than average September. Most locations in south and central areas of the NT saw the ‘green date’ (the date when the cumulative rainfall since the dry season reaches 50 mm) earlier than usual, with the Top End around a week later than usual. The first two months of the dry season have been mostly above average in terms of rainfall across the NT (see figure 1), off the back of a drier than average September. Most locations in south and central areas of the NT saw the ‘green date’ (the date when the cumulative rainfall since the dry season reaches 50 mm) earlier than usual, with the Top End around a week later than usual.

The first two months of the wet season

End around a week later than usual.

50mm) earlier than usual, with the Top

rainfall since the dry season reaches
date’ (the date when the cumulative
central areas of the NT saw the ‘green
September. Most locations in south and
1), off the back of a drier than average
rainfall across the NT (see figure
The first two months of the dry season

Figure 1. First two months of the wet season

Onset of the Monsoon

Normally at this time of year there would be signs of the monsoon forming in the southern hemisphere. However as at mid-December, the monsoon focus remains north of the equator so we do not expect the monsoon to be active for north Australia until the end of December at the earliest.

There has been no sign of a significant southern hemisphere monsoon trough near the Australian region for the 2017-18 northern wet season to date. The broad scale climate pattern across the equatorial Indian and western Pacific oceans, with a double near-equatorial trough pattern, is unfavourable for monsoon trough development in the Australian region. When the MJO (Madden-Julian Oscillation) is active in our part of the world, we see a pick-up in the weather and sometimes it is associated with an active monsoon phase – MJO is not likely to be in our area until towards the end of the month or early in January.

Climate drivers and La Niña

We are now in an active La Niña, which is typically associated with above-average rainfall during the northern wet season, average or above-average tropical cyclone numbers across the Australian region and an earlier onset of the Australian monsoon. However, the effects associated with the current late-developing and relatively weak La Niña are not expected to be typical. Near-average sea surface temperatures are expected to persist across waters to the north and west of northern Australia (atypical during La Niña), and current rainfall outlooks do not indicate above-average rainfall for the next three months for northern Australia. The outlook for the next three months (figure 3) shows a good chance of close to average rainfall totals, with temperatures likely to be a little higher than usual (figure 4).

Minister’s Message

During the last sittings of Parliament for 2017 I was honoured to pay tribute to Territory cattle industry icon Ted Hart, who passed away in October. For 35 years up until 2008 Ted was the owner of Hodgson River Station and throughout his long and adventurous life he exemplified the pioneering spirit of the Territory pastoral industry. Ted came to the Territory in 1948 to work on Limbunya Station before returning to Queensland to buy a station. He and his partner stocked it with 500 head only to learn the hard way what drought can do. Ted gave the surviving 50 head to his partner and walked away. He came to the Alice Springs region in 1956 and worked on a number of stations before starting his own bull breeding project. His work was pioneering, but drought came calling again. Unbroken, in 1973 Ted bought Hodgson River Station, surviving the beef slump of 1974 and carrying out more research with the Department of Primary Industries. His station became one of the best-run in the region, and Ted was the mainstay of the Droughtmaster breed. He helped the department build a Droughtmaster herd at Victoria River District, and bulls from there are highly sought after. Ted retired to a small block on the banks of the Katherine River, where he died on October 29 surrounded by family. He represented the best qualities of a true Territorian – modest, kind and generous, a great bushman, and an enterprising and inventive cattlemans. The Territory cattle industry recently lost another pioneering icon, Bob Savage, who with his late wife Lillian, established remote Suplejack Downs Station in the 1960s (See Tribute Below). People like Ted Hart and Bob Savage dedicated their lives to the cattle industry and I am proud to be in a position to support them as Minister for Primary Industry. December Vietnam Visit

In my role as the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources, I recently headed to Vietnam with NTCA Executive Officer Tom Ryan to discuss increasing live cattle exports to Vietnam. We met with the Minister for Industry and Trade and Vice Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development. During the four-day visit, we also toured the Hoa Phat Group feedlot, which has a capacity for 7000 head. The Vietnamese are keen to import more Australian cattle, and have invested heavily to comply with Australian animal welfare standards. I look forward to working with the industry to make the most of such opportunities in 2018.

In closing, I wish you all a safe and happy Christmas.

Ken Vowles - Minister for Primary Industry & Resources

FOR MORE DETAILS, CONTACT: Greg Browning - Senior Climate Liaison Officer: G.Browning@bom.gov.au

Climate Watch 2017

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The NTCA wishes all of our members and friends in the industry a safe and happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year!

We look forward to working with you all in 2018.

The NTCA Darwin office will close at COB on the 22nd of December and reopen on the 3rd of January.