

Policy Title: **Stock Route and Road Easement Management**

Policy No: 273

Directorate: Engineering & Environmental Services

Responsible Officer: Manager – Environmental Services

Adopted Date: Standing Committee Meeting 05/10/2016

Review Date: 05/10/2018

VERSION	MEETING APPROVED	MEETING DATE	HISTORY
1	Standing Committee Meeting	05/10/2016	New Policy

Authorities: *Local Law No. 2 (Animal Management) 2011*  
*Stock Route Management Act 2002*  
*Stock Route Management Regulation 2003*  
*Biosecurity Act 2014*

## **POLICY:**

The North Burnett Regional Council (NBRC) will promote and permit the grazing of Stock Routes and Rural Road Easements across the North Burnett region. This permitted grazing will accommodate:

- Available grass resources located at the area where the permit is sought at the time that it is sought for grazing.
- Preservation of grazing resources within the stock routes and road easement for:
  - anticipated travelling stock movements/frequency, and
  - emergency grazing fodder during times of declared drought.
- A desire to minimise pasture resource wastage associated with the need for burning Stock Routes and Road Easements as part of “fire hazard reduction burns”.
- A desire to improve the quality of available pasture resources within Stock Routes and Roads Easements through grazing practices promoting new growth.
- A desire for NBRC to assist local livestock owners to grow the local economy by increasing the availability and quality of pasture resources.
- The need for livestock owners to pay a reasonable amount for access to these feed resources.
- The need to ensure that grazing is conducted in an appropriate manner that preserves the safety of motorists using any gazetted roads.
- The need of livestock owners to be able to provide appropriate care and supervision of their animals, including being able to supply water to their stock.

- The need to ensure that biosecurity risks are appropriately managed.

While every reasonable administrative effort will be made to ensure risks associated with grazing livestock along Stock Routes and Road Easements are effectively managed and mitigated wherever possible, Council accepts no responsibility for any loss or damage associated with these activities. The effective containment of livestock is solely the responsibility of the livestock's owner/s, along with any loss or damage associated with them (including interactions/incidents/accidents with motorists using a gazetted road) or the use of the Stock Route/Road Easement.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Council is responsible for the administration and management of Stock Routes and Road Easements across the North Burnett region. The Stock Route Management Act 2002 (the Act) and associated Regulation 2003 (the Regulation) are the primary legislative requirements for the administration and management of these Stock Routes. NBRC Local Law No. 2 (Animal Management) 2011 is the primary legislative requirement for livestock owners to ensure their animals are effectively contained to areas they are permitted to occupy, and prevented from wandering/straying. NBRC Local Law No. 2 (Animal Management) 2011 applies to both privately owned and Council responsible land (inclusive of Road Easements).

Whilst NBRC is not legally mandated to have a "Stock Route Network Management Plan" under **s105** of the Act, due to NBRC not being listed under **Schedule 1** of the Regulation, it is recommended that a policy be put in place for the management of Stock Routes and Road Easements across the region.

The development of a transparent formalised policy will create consistency across the region and promote both awareness and delivery of the policy's objectives.

## **OBJECTIVES:**

The objectives of NBRC's policy are to:

- Create a transparent formalised strategy that will create consistency across the region and promote both awareness and delivery of the strategy's objectives.
- Reduce incidents of wandering/straying livestock or unauthorised grazing.
- Promote and provide greater access to available grazing resources within both the Stock Routes and Road Easements in the North Burnett region.
- Ensure sufficient pasture resources are retained within Stock Routes and Road Easements for:
  - anticipated travelling stock movements/frequency, and
  - emergency grazing fodder during times of declared drought.
- Reduce pasture resource wastage associated with a need to conduct "fire hazard reduction burns" for Stock Routes and Road Easements.
- Improve the quality of available pasture resources within Stock Routes and Road Easements through managed grazing promoting new, more nutritious pasture growth.

- Ensure that biosecurity risks for both the livestock and land they are occupying/moving through are appropriately managed.
- Ensure that livestock owners utilising these pasture resources pay a reasonable amount for access to these resources.
- Help ensure that costs to Council for managing Stock Routes and Road Easements is minimised or eliminated.
- Ensure that the safety, lives and property of motorists using gazetted roads are preserved.
- Ensure that welfare and supervision of livestock grazing within Stock Routes and Road Easements is appropriate.

This policy and its strategy will provide the overarching basis of how Council develops and administers its supporting procedures relating to the administration/management of Stock Routes and Road Easements across the North Burnett. The supporting procedures relating to this policy are Doc ID's: 629 471, 627 888, 628 079 & 665 827.

This policy operates in conjunction with NBRC's Wandering Livestock Policy (Doc ID: 733 532) and associated Procedures (Doc ID's: 742 024, 655 024, 735 887 & 770 804). Failure by landholders to effectively contain livestock or lawfully occupy a location shall be dealt with under NBRC's Wandering Livestock Policy and associated Procedures. Repeat offences or serious/intentional/negligent breaches of Stock Route/Road Easement grazing permit requirements/conditions may result in the cancellation of any permits issued in addition to any fines and/or fees/charges that are applied.

#### **STRATEGY:**

NBRC will promote the grazing of Stock Routes and Road Easements where sufficient width of easement occurs to support potential livestock grazing and not create increased risks to the safety, lives or property of motorists using gazetted roads.

The grazing of Stock Routes and Road Easements shall only occur under permit issued by NBRC, whereby the objectives of this policy can be achieved.

In accessing these pasture resources, the livestock owner shall be required to pay the prescribed fee for each applicable animal on a per head per week basis as per Council's published fees and charges. These fees shall not be less than the prescribed fees listed within Schedule 2 of the Regulation.

NBRC shall inspect and assess any proposed locations for Stock Route/Road Easement grazing for:

- The presence of invasive weed pests and other biosecurity risks.
- The biosecurity risks posed by the livestock proposed to graze the area.
- The estimated average amount of pasture potentially available for stock. The average amount of available pasture for a location shall be maintained at approximately 1000 kg/ha for the purposes of potential travelling stock and/or for potential use during declared drought. These will be assessed using appropriate pasture photo standards. All pasture resources above this threshold can potentially be made available for permitted grazing.

(Often land can accumulate available grass resources of around 2,500 kg/ha but could also hold up to around 4,000 kg/ha).

- Determining if the proposed location is able to support the proposed number and duration of grazing animals occupying the location, whilst still preserving the minimally required reserves of 1,000 kg/ha of potentially available pasture.

For all Stock Routes that occur within the North Burnett region, it is officially recognised that these Stock Routes are presently “Unused” for the purposes of travelling stock. Accordingly, the assessment of available grass resources that need to be retained for such purposes should reflect this essentially unused level of anticipated use (perhaps used once per year, if at all). The availability of grass resources as an emergency provision during times of declared drought is therefore a key consideration in the definition of the retained grass inventory.

Council will promote the self management of cattle numbers by livestock and land owners for the land parcels normally available to them and subject to the prevailing natural conditions of the time. It is expected that sound land management practices will be applied whereby stock numbers and their associated grazing pressures on land are appropriately managed, dependant upon prevailing natural conditions of the time. Livestock numbers should be increased or decreased depending upon available pasture resources that can be sustainably grazed.

To help support the community in times of hardship during declared drought, Council can decide to make available to livestock owners within the local community, the pasture resources available within the Stock Routes and Road Easements (which should be a minimum of 1000 kg/ha). The grazing of Stock Routes and Road Easements during times of declared drought shall also be under permit issued by Council. Council may also decide to amend what payment is applicable (if any) for the grazing of the Stock Routes and Road Easements during times of declared drought.

Council will evaluate and approve applications to graze defined locations of its Stock Routes and Road Easements during declared drought conditions on a case by case basis. The assessment of these applications shall consider:

- Those most in need of emergency assistance.
- Those that have applied sound land and livestock management practices in the lead up to the application.
- What actions the livestock owner proposes to take after they have grazed the defined location/s of the Stock Route/Road Easements (should their application be approved).
- The applicants preparedness and ability to ensure other risks/requirements for grazing livestock along Stock Routes/Road Easements can be managed (including biosecurity risks, effective livestock containment, supervision and care, and ensuring risks to the safety, lives and property of motorists are preserved, etc).

Livestock owners shall be required to assume all responsibility associated with grazing the stock route/road easement, including any losses or damage to:

- Themselves,
- Their livestock, and/or
- The safety, lives and property of vehicles and their occupants as a shared responsibility with the owner/operator of vehicles using gazetted roads at the location of livestock occupation/grazing.

Livestock owners shall also be required to provide, utilise and maintain effective containment for their animals and appropriate care and supervision of their animals (including stock watering).

**DEFINITIONS:**

<b>Biosecurity Risks</b>	As defined and applied within the Biosecurity Act (2014). The management of risks associated with the presence or prevention of “Biosecurity Matter” occurring within the North Burnett region as prescribed under the Biosecurity Act (2014), NBRC’s Biosecurity Plan and associated Programs.
<b>Effective containment</b>	Control measures that restrict and prevent the movement of livestock from the areas they are permitted to occupy/graze. This may include fencing, tethering, or other means to achieve such control, where failures to contain livestock do not occur.
<b>Fire Hazard Reduction Burn</b>	A controlled burn conducted under permit issued by Queensland Fire Service and Council (for land that is the responsibility of Council). The purpose of these controlled burns is to reduce the potential “fuel” load from organic matter that could pose a fire risk to the safety, lives and property of people.
<b>Pasture Resources</b>	All pasture species and the amounts potentially available for grazing, within the location in question (in this instance within the Stock Routes and Road Easements of the North Burnett). Components of the plant (such as root mass) that are not normally grazed by livestock are not included under this definition.
<b>Livestock</b>	Cattle, horses, goats, sheep, pigs, or any animal used for agricultural purposes.
<b>Local</b>	Residing and/or owned within the Council defined boundaries of the North Burnett Region.
<b>North Burnett Region</b>	Any location occurring within the Council defined boundaries of the North Burnett Region.
<b>Reasonable Amount</b>	An amount considered “reasonable” by the elected members of Council. The amount shall not be less than the regulated amount prescribed under the Act, but may be more subject to Council’s deliberations on what is reasonable.
<b>Wandering / Straying</b>	The animal is not under the effective control of someone and the animal is in either a public place, or a private place without the consent of the occupier.