

Fire Management on Pastoral Properties in Central Cape York Peninsula

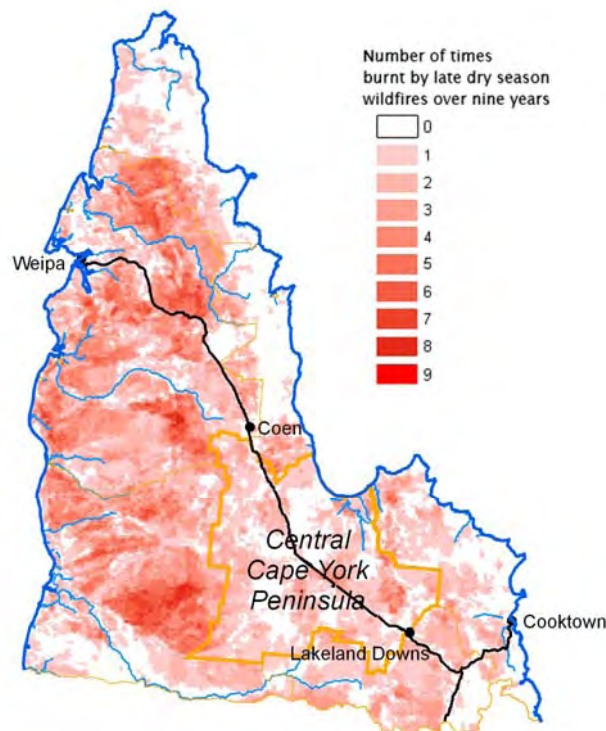
Why manage fire

Large areas of Cape York Peninsula are burnt each year, mostly by late dry season fires. The map below shows how often Cape York Peninsula was burnt by late dry season fires in the nine years from 1997 to 2005. Some areas, mostly rainforest, were never burnt by wildfires in this period; others were burnt nearly every year.

Properties on Central Cape York Peninsula were burnt by wildfire less often than were properties on the western side of the peninsula. This is largely because most land managers in the region undertook active fire management. Most land managers in central Cape York Peninsula say that, if they did not burn fire breaks in the early dry season, their properties would also be regularly burnt out by extensive wildfires late in the year.

Poor fire management can lead to loss of forage and vegetation thickening, thereby reducing the viability of cattle properties. It can also cause loss of habitat for native plants and animals.

Details about the impacts of fire are presented in this leaflet, along with guidelines on the best ways to manage fire, based on the experience of local land managers and scientists. The leaflet also uses a make-believe property called Pretend Plains to demonstrate best practice fire management for central Cape York Peninsula. This advice can be adapted to suit other areas of the peninsula.



Late dry season fires

Fire-scar data from www.firenorth.org.au based on NOAA satellite imagery.

This leaflet has been prepared by Gabriel Crowley & Mandy Trueman (Tropical Savannas CRC) with information from local pastoralists, pastoral advisors, fire managers and ecologists. Thanks are extended to all who contributed, especially Wendy Seabrook & Sandy Lloyd (Cape York Peninsula Landcare Program), Stephen Garnett (Charles Darwin University), Tom & Sue Shephard (Artemis), Peter Thompson & Stephen Hall (Cape York Sustainable Fire Management Project), Joe Rolfe (Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries), Brian Lynch (Northern Territory Bushfires Council), Eda Addicott (Queensland Environmental Protection Agency), and Joe Miller (pastoral consultant).