

Calendar for fire management: Central Cape York Peninsula

Early Dry Season

Create fire breaks to reduce the occurrence and spread of wildfires

Identify the main directions that wildfires come from, and create barriers to reduce the risk of them entering your property. On central Cape York Peninsula most fires come from the southeast, so securing the south-eastern boundary is a priority. It is also important to break up the country, so that if there is a wildfire on the property, only a small section is likely to get burnt.

- On Pretend Plains they burn along ridge lines using Aerial Control Burning, making sure not to burn the same ridge each year to avoid vegetation thickening. This is done before the country dries off too much. These breaks are used to reinforce natural barriers made by major creek lines, burning different sides of the creek each year.
- They check the Firenorth website www.firenorth.org.au to find any gaps in the fire breaks. Then fill in the gaps using on-ground burning.
- They grade or slash all of their tracks to make effective fire breaks

Use fire to control cattle movements

As cattle are attracted to recently burnt ground, some pastoralists in central Cape York Peninsula burn at mustering time to bring in cattle. This practice is becoming less popular as land managers are more concerned about vegetation thickening, and as more country is fenced.

- On Pretend Plains, they burn around dams at mustering time to concentrate cattle, but only in unfenced country and are careful not to burn the same areas each year. They are progressively fencing paddocks and building trap yards to reduce the need for this type of burning, as well as to improve cattle management.

Mid to Late Dry Season

Watch for fires and try to restrict the spread of any fires on the property

Wildfires can threaten the property any time from August onwards. A rapid response to such fires can restrict the amount of damage they have on cattle and wildlife.

- On Pretend Plains, they regularly check the Firenorth website for fires www.firenorth.org.au.
- When fires threaten, they back-burn into them, burning away from permanent streams, graded tracks and previously burnt breaks.

First heavy storms

Use fire to maintain or restore the country's open structure

Storm-burning after spelling from grazing is useful for maintaining open country, but needs to be undertaken with care (see page 2)

- On Pretend Plains they wait for 2-3 days after the first rains of an inch or more, then burn areas that are prone to thickening by suckers, burning up to one quarter of the property each year. Before lighting up, they make sure that either fire breaks or very wet conditions will prevent the fires spreading outside the areas they intend to burn

Follow same pattern of burning each year, changing the areas that are burnt, so that individual areas do not get burnt more than once every two to five years, depending on country type (see pages 4-5).

To get further copies of this leaflet

You can download a copy of this leaflet as a PDF file from the Tropical Savannas Cooperative Research Centre's North Australian Land Manager website (www.landmanager.org.au). Botanical names used in this leaflet can also be found on this website.

Contact details for getting help with fire, cattle and biodiversity management

Cape York Sustainable Fire Management Project
Phone: 4031 3432
Email: cypda@cypda.com.au

Cape York Peninsula Landcare Program
Phone: 4069 5046
Email: landcare@capeyorks.com

Queensland Rural Fire Service
Phone: 4039 8240
Website: www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au

Queensland Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries, Mareeba
Phone: 4048 4600

Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service, Atherton
Phone: 4091 8191