

# Buffel Grass Weed Management Plan 2026-2036

## Purpose

This document provides an overview of the Buffel Grass Weed Management Plan 2026-2036, and how it was developed through extensive public consultation, feedback, and community input.

## Background

Buffel grass was introduced in the Northern Territory and intentionally planted across Central Australia to control dust and erosion, and for drought-resistant fodder for cattle. It has since become widespread, impacting biodiversity, cultural values, and fire regimes. However, it is also valued by many in the pastoral industry as an improved pasture species which is considered to increase production capacity in arid areas.

Due to its negative impacts, buffel grass was declared a weed under the *NT Weeds Management Act 2001* (the Act) in July 2024. In response, the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment (DLPE), in collaboration with the Buffel Grass Weed Advisory Committee (WAC), began drafting a Weed Management Plan (WMP) for buffel grass.

## Developing the draft WMP

Significant stakeholder engagement was undertaken by DLPE during the development phase of the draft WMP between October 2024 and November 2025.

The Buffel Grass Weed Advisory Committee, appointed by the Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment, comprises representatives from land management, pastoralism and government sectors, and met numerous times to discuss, workshop and communicate content for the draft WMP. Information was collected around management capacity, impacts on culture and the environment, the current use of buffel grass by the pastoral industry and organic certification regulations.

This work led to a Have Your Say (HYS) online survey being launched in mid-2025 that received more than 300 individual submissions, with a survey report provided to the WAC and Minister for consideration.

## Developing the final WMP

The draft Buffel Grass Weed Management Plan was approved by the Minister for release for public comment between 19 December 2025 and 16 February 2026.

The public consultation on the draft Plan resulted in 222 responses, which informed the content and direction of the final Plan – now called the Buffel Grass Weed Management Plan 2026-2036.

## The Buffel Grass Weed Management Plan 2026-2036

The Buffel Grass Weed Management Plan 2026-2036 (the Plan) was approved by the Minister in March 2026, to come into effect on 1 May 2026.

The Plan addresses the management of buffel grass as a declared weed under the Act.

The Plan focuses on reducing further spread of buffel grass and reducing impacts on significant cultural and environmental values while continuing to allow for its use on the pastoral estate.

All landholders have legal obligations under the Plan and the Act to manage buffel grass to prevent its spread off their land, and to protect priority environmental and cultural assets from its impacts.

Pastoralists are not required to eradicate buffel grass on pastoral land, and the continued use of buffel grass is permitted under the Plan and through an industry-wide permit for land administered under the *Pastoral Land Act 1992*. Through this industry-permit, pastoral lessees are exempt from offences relating to the propagation, scattering, sale or purchase of buffel grass, as well as the hire of equipment containing buffel grass, and the storage, cultivation and transport of buffel grass.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) will apply for the industry-wide permit on behalf of pastoralists.

An individual permit is required by anyone seeking to import buffel grass into the Northern Territory, including pastoralists. Applications are made via a single-page application form.

Permit requirements for importation strengthen the Northern Territory's biosecurity protections. Unregulated importation and propagation of uncertified seed and new buffel grass cultivars pose a significant risk of introducing new weeds and additional buffel grass strains.

The Buffel Grass Economic Impact Assessment (EIA) is being finalised and will be used to inform future operational planning and expenditure.

## General objectives of the Plan

Despite the very high risk rating of buffel grass, due to its widespread distribution and biological persistence, it is considered that buffel grass cannot be feasibly eradicated from the NT at this time.

## Specific objectives of the Plan

All owners and occupiers of land must be aware of their legal obligations to manage buffel grass under the Plan and the Act.

Priority environmental and cultural assets must be protected from the impacts of buffel grass.

The spread of buffel grass along transport corridors must be reduced.

Transparent and accountable compliance, monitoring and reporting processes must be implemented.

Activities under the Plan will support the achievement of the objectives of the Buffel Grass Management Strategy.

The planting, import or purchase of buffel grass will not be approved for use outside the pastoral setting.

Where the application pertains to the sale of seed in the NT, it may only be sold to persons holding a permit to purchase and use buffel grass on pastoral lands.

## Additional information

[Buffel grass | NT.GOV.AU](https://www.nt.gov.au/da/land-use/buffel-grass/)

[Buffel Grass Weed Advisory Committee](#)

[Buffel Grass Management Strategy: Central Australia 2024 – 2030](#)

[Weed risk assessment | Department of Lands, Planning and Environment](#)

[Northern Territory Legislation](#)