

Buffel Grass Permit Guidelines

Department of Lands, Planning and Environment

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1. Purpose

This document provides guidance on permit requirements and application assessments relating to the use of buffel grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris* and *C. pennisetiformis*) under Section 28F of the *Weeds Management Act 2001* (the Act).

2. Background

General background

Buffel grass is a declared weed under the Northern Territory *Weeds Management Act 2001* (the Act). The declaration was approved by the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water Security in July 2024, following advice from a technical working group and Weed Advisory Committee, recognising the plant's significant environmental, cultural and fire-related impacts, while acknowledging its long-standing pastoral use.

The declaration applies across the entire Northern Territory and to all land tenures. Declaring buffel grass does not prohibit its ongoing use, but how it is used and managed is regulated under the Act.

Under the Act, the use of a declared weed is regulated through a permit framework that establishes when and how the weed may be used. Statutory weed management plans operate alongside the Act to give effect to this framework by setting out the practical rules, conditions and safeguards that apply for a declared weed. Section 9E of the Act establishes a general duty that a person must not, without a permit:

- Bring or be responsible for bringing buffel grass into the Northern Territory.
- Propagate or scatter, store, grow or use buffel grass or anything that contains or carries buffel grass.
- Sell or purchase or offer to sell or purchase buffel grass.
- Hire or offer to hire equipment, device or any other thing that contains buffel grass.
- Transport or carry buffel grass.

The [Buffel Grass Weed Management Plan 2026 - 2036](#) (the Plan) provides the statutory basis for how buffel grass may be used. The Plan outlines the circumstances in which use is permitted, the areas where it may continue to be used and the management and control obligations that apply.

The Plan enables continued pastoral use of buffel grass through a permit, providing regulatory certainty for permitted activities, while ensuring that risks to natural and cultural heritage values are managed.

Buffel grass use

Two types of permits are available for buffel grass use. These include a pastoral industry-wide permit and an individual permit.

To allow for the continued pastoral use of buffel grass, the Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment has granted a pastoral industry permit for Crown land subject to pastoral lease under the *Pastoral Land Act 1992*.

Land used for pastoral activities that is **not** subject to the *Pastoral Land Act 1992* is not covered by the

industry-wide permit and therefore requires an individual permit. Examples may include Crown land under non-pastoral lease, freehold land, Aboriginal land and some zoned land (e.g. Rural Living and Agriculture zones) under the NT Planning Scheme 2020 where pastoral activities are demonstrably undertaken.

Individual permits are also required to import buffel grass into the Northern Territory, for commercial businesses wishing to sell or distribute buffel grass for pastoral purposes, and for any non-pastoral use of buffel grass, such as for pastoral research purposes.

Permit requirements

Appendix A of the Plan, reproduced in the table below, identifies activities considered lower risk and therefore not an operational or compliance focus. Activities assessed as higher risk require an individual permit.

Identification of an activity as lower risk does not constitute an authorisation under the Act.

Requirements under the Act	Low Risk Activity Not deemed to be an operational or compliance focus under this Plan- permits will not be required	Higher Risk Activity Deemed to be a focus under this plan- individual permits will be required	Allowance for Pastoral Use
Not bring a declared weed into the NT*	N/A	Bring buffel grass, including seeds, into the NT*	Individual permit applications required
Not propagate or scatter a declared weed*	The scattering of buffel grass, with seed sourced from within the same weed management region by owners/occupiers within land parcels used for the purposes of pastoral production, as long as use is in accordance with the objectives of the <i>Pastoral Land Act 1992</i> and the size does not exceed 1 ha.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propagation or scattering of buffel grass not for the purposes of pastoral production* • Propagation or scattering of buffel in areas greater than 1 ha* 	To be allowed under pastoral use permit, to be issued by the Minister, for land administered under the <i>Pastoral Land Act 1992</i>
Not purchase or sell a declared weed or thing containing a declared weed*	N/A	Purchase or sell buffel grass, including seeds*	To be allowed under pastoral use permit, to be issued by the Minister, for land administered under the <i>Pastoral Land Act 1992</i> . NB can only be purchased within the NT otherwise an individual import permit is required

Not hire any equipment or item which contains a declared weed*	Hire of equipment containing buffel grass within the Alice Springs Town Council Area or within 10 kms of Tennant Creek	Equipment containing buffel grass hired for use in non-infested areas*	To be allowed under pastoral use permit, to be issued by the Minister, for land administered under the <i>Pastoral Land Act 1992</i>
Not store, grow or use a declared weed*	The storage or deliberate cultivation of existing buffel grass by owners/occupiers within land parcels used for the purposes of pastoral production, as long as use is in accordance with the objectives of the <i>Pastoral Land Act 1992</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Storage or deliberate cultivation of buffel grass not for the purposes of pastoral production* 	To be allowed under pastoral use permit, to be issued by the Minister, for land administered under the <i>Pastoral Land Act 1992</i>
Not transport or carry a declared weed on public roads or roads not owned or occupied by the person in question*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transport of buffel grass through areas of existing infestation Transport of buffel grass through areas used for pastoral production 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transport of buffel grass through non infested areas* Transport of buffel grass off maintained roads (non-pastoral land) or off pastoral land* 	To be allowed under pastoral use permit, to be issued by the Minister, for land administered under the <i>Pastoral Land Act 1992</i>

*without a permit

3. Additional Information

General guidance for use of buffel grass under a permit

Section 6 of the Plan provides advice about the use of buffel grass under a permit.

The duration of a permit may vary depending on the circumstances, but it can be granted for up to 10 years. A single permit can be granted for multiple activities, such as purchasing seed, scattering and propagating, within the same property and/or multiple instances of the same activity over a period of time.

The following factors may be considered when assessing any permit applications to use buffel grass:

- Relevant information from the Buffel Grass Weed Risk Assessment [Weed risk assessment | Department of Lands, Planning and Environment](#).
- Whether the permit application is in keeping with the objectives of the [Buffel Grass Management Strategy: Central Australia 2024–2030](#).
- Where relevant, the nature of the location, such as existing buffel grass distribution, state of existing native vegetation and proximity to conservation areas, as defined by the Plan.

- The broad scale planting of buffel grass will not be approved where native vegetation has been cleared, including as part of infrastructure development.
- The planting, import or purchase of buffel grass will not be approved for use outside pastoral lands.
- The Katherine and Darwin Weed Management Regions (see Figure 3 of the Plan for boundaries) are considered a lower risk for permit applications due to a lack of current evidence of buffel grass acting as an environmental weed in these areas.
- The potential for further spread of buffel grass and the proposed actions by the applicant to reduce this risk.
- Whether the development of a property weed management plan is required as part of the permit conditions.
- Where the application pertains to the import of seed into the NT, relevant factors to be considered will include the variety to be imported, whether this variety is already known to occur in the NT and invasiveness of this variety.
- Where the application pertains to the sale of buffel seed in the NT, it may only be sold to persons holding a permit to purchase and use buffel grass on pastoral lands.

General permit administration

- Once received and accepted, a minimum of four weeks is required for processing an application.
- An application may be delayed if all required information is not lodged with the application or if the information supplied is illegible.
- If insufficient space is provided, further pages can be attached to the rear of the application.
- A permit will not be processed if there are any outstanding matters arising under another permit issued under the *Weeds Management Act 2001*, for example outstanding reports.
- The grant of a permit does not imply approval for any other permit or licence which might be required. Applicants should contact relevant agencies for information. If you intend to import buffel grass from South Australia please note that buffel grass is a declared weed in that jurisdiction and there are prohibitions on the sale or transport [Proclaimed Plant Policy](#). A copy of any relevant approvals will be required. Contact the WMB prior to submitting any application to import buffel grass seed from overseas or export buffel grass from the Northern Territory.
- Permits can be approved for a period of up to 10 years.
- The Minister has the right to grant or refuse to grant a permit.
- A permit is subject to any conditions the Minister considers appropriate, including payment of a bond.

4. Definitions

Table of terms used and their definition

TERM	DEFINITION
Authorised use	Use of buffel grass that is permitted under the <i>Weeds Management Act 2001</i> , including through a permit granted under section 28F

TERM	DEFINITION
Declared weed	A plant declared to be a weed under section 7 of the <i>Weeds Management Act 2001</i>
Higher-risk activity	An activity identified in Appendix A of the Buffel Grass Weed Management Plan 2026-2036 as requiring a permit
Infestation	Dominant, to the exclusion of other species
Individual permit	A permit issued under the <i>Weeds Management Act 2001</i> authorising a specified activity or activities relating to buffel grass
Industry-wide permit	A permit granted by the Minister under the <i>Weeds Management Act 2001</i> that authorises specified pastoral uses of buffel grass on Crown land held under pastoral lease in accordance with the <i>Pastoral Land Act 1992</i>
Lower-risk activity	An activity identified in Appendix A of the Buffel Grass Weed Management Plan 2026-2036 as not being an operational or compliance focus
Non-pastoral use	Any use of buffel grass that is not directly associated with pastoral production
Pastoral land	Land used for pastoral purposes such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crown land subject to pastoral lease under the <i>Pastoral Land Act 1992</i> • Aboriginal land subject to Pastoral or Grazing Licences under section 19 of the <i>Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976</i> (Cth) • Rural Zoned land under the NT Planning Scheme 2020 where pastoral activities are demonstrably undertaken - NT Planning Scheme - part 4 zones and assessment tables
Property weed management plan	A plan for an individual property to help assess and prioritise weed control and monitor weeds impacting the property

5. Legislation and associated documents

[Northern Territory Legislation | Weeds Management Act 2001](#) - *Weeds Management Act 2001*

[Northern Territory Legislation | Pastoral Land Act 1992](#) - *Pastoral Land Act 1992*

Department resources

[Buffel grass | NT.GOV.AU](#) - Weed specific information

[Buffel Grass Weed Management Plan 2026 - 2036](#) - Statutory weed management plan

[Buffel Grass Weed Management Plan - Fact sheet](#) - Summary of management requirements

[Buffel Grass Management Strategy: Central Australia 2024–2030](#) - Overall guidance and objectives for buffel grass management in Central Australia

[Weeds management act: compliance policy](#) - Overarching outline of how the Department manages its compliance function under legislation

6. Appendices

Permit application form below

Refer to permit guidelines at Buffel grass NT.GOV.AU for general information			
1. Applicant details			
Name		Location of proposed use e.g. property name, parcel/locality/PPL	
Postal address		Email/phone	
2. Purpose and method of buffel grass use (including seed, propagules, soil, fodder, gravel, plant or machinery containing buffel grass)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Introduce to NT	<input type="checkbox"/> Propagate, sow or scatter for non-pastoral use	<input type="checkbox"/> Propagate, sow or scatter for pastoral use, greater than 1ha	<input type="checkbox"/> Storage
<input type="checkbox"/> Hire contaminated equipment outside town areas	<input type="checkbox"/> Purchase *may only purchase from a permitted seller	<input type="checkbox"/> Sell *may only sell to a permitted buyer	<input type="checkbox"/> Transport through clean areas or off maintained roads outside pastoral land
3. Period permit sought			
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 year	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 years	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 years	<input type="checkbox"/> 10 years
4. Risk management measures and monitoring (attach separate sheet if required)			
Spread prevention	e.g. comply with on-farm biosecurity measures; actively manage where adjoining non-infested conservation areas; cover/secure when transporting		
Monitoring	e.g. inspect equipment prior to leaving pastoral land; ensure buffel does not become a monoculture		
5. Source of buffel grass (if applicable)			
Business/Contact Name		Variety (if known)	
Location		Email/phone	
Declaration: I do solemnly and sincerely declare that the details given in this application are true in every particular and I make this solemn declaration by virtue of the <i>Oaths, Affidavits and Declarations Act 2010</i> .			
Applicant signature		Date	
How to submit	Email your completed form to weedinfo@nt.gov.au		

Online form available: [Buffel grass | NT.GOV.AU](https://www.nt.gov.au/land-and-environment/buffel-grass/)