

Policy

Cattle tick biosecurity zone review

Version: 1.0

1 Policy statement

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries is committed to providing a process to review the cattle tick biosecurity zoning provisions, in particular the boundary between the cattle tick free zone and the cattle tick infested zone, referred to as the tick line.

Review of cattle tick zones or the tick line may be initiated by property owners or the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. In undertaking the review, consideration will be given to a range of factors focusing on the geographic location, risks created or mitigated, sustainability of the proposed amendments to the cattle tick line location and expected regulatory impacts.

2 Background and context

The cattle tick line is designed to be a genuine divide between the area within Queensland that is cattle tick free and the area where cattle ticks are endemic. The location of the cattle tick line should be in the most sustainable position using defensible buffers that impede the spread of cattle tick. Routine property management such as fencing and occasional chemical treatments may be required to support maintaining a cattle tick free property status.

Research has shown the key factors in the survival and propagation of cattle tick are temperature and moisture. In particular, the potential for cattle tick survival is well aligned to the 500 mm rainfall isohyet and this provides the environmental control of cattle tick distribution in many parts of Queensland.

After extensive consultation for the Biosecurity Regulation 2016 and the cattle tick biosecurity zoning provisions, a new cattle tick line was established for Queensland in 2016. The cattle tick line commenced with the *Biosecurity Act 2014* on 1 July 2016.

A number of properties were included in each of the cattle tick zones that were not the preferred option of the property owners. This included some areas being included in the cattle tick free zone with a high level of infestations and some areas where property owners wished to be in the cattle tick free zone but due to the high levels of infestation were included in the cattle tick infested zone.

A commitment was given to review the cattle tick line two years after the commencement of the *Biosecurity Act 2014*. This policy was developed as a result of the review and provides for an ongoing review process.

3 Scope

This policy identifies principles that property owners and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries should consider in undertaking a review to change the area status and move the cattle tick line.

An application for a review can be received from an individual property owner or a group of properties as long as the application addresses the criteria and principles set out in this policy.

On receiving an application to change an area status, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries will undertake an assessment to determine the feasibility and practicality of rezoning a property or an area.

For the purposes of this policy the term tick season will refer to the period when cattle tick numbers start to naturally increase in the spring, until the end of one year's full eradication program, including the inspection phase, having been completed. This period is approximately from September to the end of June but may have slight variations in Central Queensland and North Queensland.

4 Principles for consideration in a review of cattle tick zoning

An application for a property or a group of properties to be rezoned must be reviewed against each of the following principles:

- The property or area (group of properties) that is the subject of the application must adjoin the cattle tick line boundary between free and infested zones.
- A suitable stock proof buffer including the use of fenced roads, other double fenced buffers or natural geographical barriers must be in place and be able to be described to define a new area. These areas must be able to be maintained livestock free.
- A cattle tick free area must be sustainable using normal management practices which do not rely on excessive human intervention. A chemical treatment regime similar to an eradication program would be considered excessive.
- Co-operation and commitment from all properties within the area needs to be demonstrated.
- The area meets the Standard Definition and Rules for Cattle Tick in Australia.

For applicants applying for a change to cattle tick free status

Applicants must be able to demonstrate:

- A change in area status will not increase the level of regulatory intervention to remain cattle tick free. e.g. increased numbers of individual properties being placed on the restricted place register and an increase in surveillance activities.
- A change in area status will not increase the risk of cattle tick infestations to other enterprises in the cattle tick free zone.
- The individual property or area can demonstrate two years of cattle tick freedom.
- The sustainability of the property to remain cattle tick free if it is to move to the free zone.

For applicants applying for a change to cattle tick infested status

Applicants must be able to demonstrate:

- A change in area status will not increase the risk of cattle tick infestations to other enterprises in the cattle tick free zone.
- That unsuccessful eradication has been attempted over a period of time and it is not sustainable to remain cattle tick free due to factors beyond their control.

5 Application process

Pre-assessment

It is strongly recommended that all applications be presented to Biosecurity Queensland prior to commencing a program. The Pre-assessment form should be completed. Biosecurity Queensland will assess the proposal against the criteria of the policy and provide guidance.

A proposal that meets the criteria of the policy can be given in principal support but will not constitute pre-approval to change the tick line.

It is the responsibility of the applicants to comply with the nominated conditions for approval to change the tick line.

Application

Where a property owner or group of property owners has determined there is substantial support for a review of their cattle tick status, they can make a written application to the General Manager, Animal Biosecurity and Welfare, Biosecurity Queensland.

Applications will only be received at the end of each year's tick season (see definition in Section 3).

Where more than one property is to be considered for rezoning, every property owner in the area must make a written submission requesting consideration of the rezoning. However, an application that does not include all property owners in an area can still be considered if evidence can be provided that the benefits of the proposed change are significantly greater than maintaining the current zone status.

If an area is rezoned from tick infested to tick free, all properties within the newly declared free zone must comply with the regulatory requirements.

Rezoning to a tick free zone and using regulation to enforce eradication programs on any properties that were not part of an application, will only occur if the size and strategic location of these properties and their associated cattle numbers has a significant adverse effect on the overall progress of the area.

Any application for review must provide two consecutive years of cattle tick management records as evidence. The submission must include:

- All relevant information or circumstances that prompted the consideration of the property or area for rezoning.
- Details of the proposed location of the cattle tick line or rezoned areas.
- Identification of fences, roads or other stock-proof barriers.
- Real or potential impact on the neighbouring properties in the cattle tick free and/or infested zone, including impacts on a person's general biosecurity obligation.
- Items detailed in 5.1 or 5.2 as relevant.

5.1 Changing from cattle tick infested zone to cattle tick free zone

- Evidence that the property or area (group of properties) is free of cattle ticks. This will require evidence of how eradication programs have been undertaken and include details of inspections undertaken to establish the success of cattle tick eradication.
- Evidence of eradication programs could include chemical treatment records, proof of purchase of chemicals or records to indicate a destocking program.
- Three herd inspections undertaken by an independent suitably qualified person (e.g. accredited certifier) must be completed over two consecutive years in the period between March and June. Note: The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries may approve inspections outside this period based on seasonal conditions or other factors e.g. size of property, ability to muster.
- Each herd inspection must meet the following requirements:
 - Inspections are required to comply with the *Procedure for manual inspection of high risk carriers* and *Procedure for manual inspection of low risk carriers* as prescribed in the [Queensland Biosecurity Manual](#).

- The number of livestock inspected must provide 99% confidence that there is less than a 0.25% risk of an infestation, these levels can be determined using standard statistical tables (see Appendix 1).
- No inspections are to be undertaken within six weeks following any chemical treatment that would control cattle tick.
- Evidence of a suitable buffer of double fenced roads, other double fenced stock free buffers, natural barriers or other defined areas that can assist in maintaining the cattle tick free zone.
- Evidence of additional biosecurity measures that are in place to maintain a cattle tick free status and to provide for early detection and eradication of cattle tick.
- Additional supporting information e.g. any infestations in the adjoining cattle tick free zone in the vicinity that may adversely impact on any changes to the tick line in the location.

5.1 (a) Recognition of previous cattle tick free status

- Properties that previously had a cattle tick free status may have this recognised as part of the application.
- This includes properties that were either:
 - Within the tick infested zone but were recognised as tick free by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.
 - Cattle tick free properties previously located within the cattle tick free or control zone and moved into the tick infested zone on 1 July 2016.
- To have previous cattle tick free status recognised, the following should be provided:
 - Evidence of historical cattle tick free status. Evidence could include but not be limited to:
 - previous clean herd inspections for a period of at least 2 consecutive years
 - previous clean livestock movements when complying with regulations.
 - Evidence that all high risk cattle tick carriers moved onto the property since 1 July 2016 were either:
 - direct from properties in the cattle tick free zone, or
 - an accredited certifier has applied the risk minimisation requirements for movement to the cattle tick free zone.
- Other evidence of biosecurity procedures that have been undertaken to ensure a cattle tick free status has been maintained since 1 July 2016.

Recognition of previous cattle tick free status can negate the requirement for an eradication program to be completed. Proof of freedom herd inspections must still be undertaken as per section 5.1.

Where there is evidence of sufficient numbers of high risk carriers having been inspected free of cattle tick by accredited certifiers over the previous two years, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries may approve those inspections to be the required herd inspection.

5.2 Changing from cattle tick free zone to cattle tick infested zone

- Two years of cattle tick management records which demonstrate that the property or area (group of properties) has been unable to achieve eradication of cattle tick after reasonable and practical eradication efforts have been undertaken.
- Evidence of factors outside the control of the individual that make it unreasonable and or impractical to achieve cattle tick eradication.
- Evidence of an alternative suitable buffer of double fenced roads, other double fenced stock free buffers, natural barriers or other defined areas that can assist in maintaining the cattle tick free zone.

- Additional supporting information e.g. infestations in the vicinity that will adversely impact on any changes to the tick line in the location.

6 Assessment process

6.1 Stage one

Upon receipt of an application, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries will make an assessment to determine whether the level of support within the area is sufficient to warrant rezoning.

This will include gathering additional supporting information. This information may include the number of infested properties in the area, the degree to which they are infested (e.g. low versus heavy infestation) or known level of compliance or non-compliance with regulatory obligations.

The application will be assessed against the following criteria:

- If a more sustainable cattle tick line would be created as a result of rezoning.
- If the defined area can sustainably be maintained free of cattle ticks using only routine property management practices. Fencing and a reasonable number of preventative chemical treatments would be examples of routine management practices.
- There should be minimal residual cattle tick infestations in the area for the previous two years. The number of tick infested properties remaining in the area subject to the application should be 2 – 5% of total properties.
- Infestation levels on these properties (2 – 5%) should be low and the properties must be able to demonstrate they are capable of eradicating ticks in the next 12 months.
- The levels of regulatory obligations imposed on the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for eradication, surveillance or compliance activities.
- If isolated areas would be created that cannot be maintained as cattle tick free.
- Potential impact of the rezoning on property access:
 - into or out of the cattle tick free zone
 - to cattle tick clearing facilities
 - to other biosecurity enterprises (e.g. feedlots or abattoirs).

6.2 Stage two

If an application successfully addresses the criteria set out in this policy, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries will undertake surveillance activities on the property or properties within the area for the duration of the next cattle tick season.

Surveillance may include whole herd inspections, records of clean livestock movements undertaken by accredited certifiers or other valid methods to show that livestock within the area are cattle tick free.

During this time the properties subject to the applications will remain in their current cattle tick zone and will be subject to any and all regulations that apply to that zone or individual property.

It is the responsibility of the property owners to prevent against reinfestation arising from other sources such as introduction of infested cattle or spread from infested places within the zone.

6.3 Consideration of alternative to rezoning

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries may consider alternative options for applications that fail to meet the criteria and principles set out in this policy.

This may include alternative zone boundaries when the applicant can demonstrate the rejection of the application will adversely impact on either the property or the sustainability of the free zone.

7 Department of Agriculture and Fisheries initiated review

The General Manager, Animal Biosecurity and Welfare may, on behalf of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, initiate a review of the cattle tick zones when:

- There are high levels of infested properties in a cattle tick free zone.
- There are high levels of ongoing regulatory obligations, particularly a high level of failure to successfully eradicate infestations.
- There are persistent recurring infestations within an area.
- Regulatory intervention is unsuccessful or fails to meet Queensland Fundamental Legislative Principles that require that legislation should have sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals and to the institution of Parliament.
- A more sustainable cattle tick line is identified by movement of the boundary to more secure and defined buffers, including double fenced roads.
- As part of regulatory reviews or for other reasons deemed appropriate.

8 Consultation

Any review undertaken must provide opportunity for consultation and allow for consideration of submissions from local or potentially impacted stakeholders within the locality.

Consultation will be open only after surveillance undertaken by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries indicates an application for a change of zone is justified. This will normally be in the later months of a tick season. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries will make reasonable effort to alert directly impacted stakeholders.

Property owners identified during the pre-assessment process that are in the affected area but not part of the application, will be notified by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries of the potential implications of a change to the cattle tick zone and the possible enforcement of regulations to ensure a tick free zone.

9 Amendment of cattle tick line and zones

Upon approval of the application the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries will progress legislative amendments to the cattle tick zones within 12 months following approval.

10 Related and reference documents

- [Procedure for eradicating cattle tick from infested land](#)
- [Procedure for manual inspection of low risk carriers](#)
- [Queensland Biosecurity Manual](#)

Appendix 1

Herd inspection rate to provide 99% confidence.

Herd Size	Prevalence			
	1%	0.5%	0.25%	0.10%
Less than 300	234	285	298	all
300	235	286	299	300
400	273	360	396	400
500	300	420	487	500
600	320	470	572	600
700	336	511	649	699
800	349	546	720	798
900	359	576	783	895
1000	368	601	841	990
2000	410	737	1203	1800
3000	425	792	1375	2353
4000	433	821	1475	2734
5000	438	840	1539	3008
6000	442	852	1585	3214
7000	444	861	1618	3373
8000	446	868	1644	3500
9000	447	874	1664	3603
10000	448	878	1681	3689
12000	450	885	1706	3823
15000	452	892	1732	3964