

Northern Territory Pastoral Feed Outlook April to July 2024

The purpose of this quarterly outlook is to summarise information relevant to the pastoral industry such as current feed supplies, seasonal conditions, the development of drought conditions and relative fire risk. This edition summarises modelled pasture growth in April 2024.

You can subscribe to receive the Outlook [here](#).

You can see the entire document and all districts by continuing to scroll through this file. If you are interested in selected sections you can click on the links below.

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[Northern Territory Seasonal Outlook – as at April 2024](#)

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[Sturt Plateau District](#)

[Roper District](#)

[Gulf District](#)

[Barkly District](#)

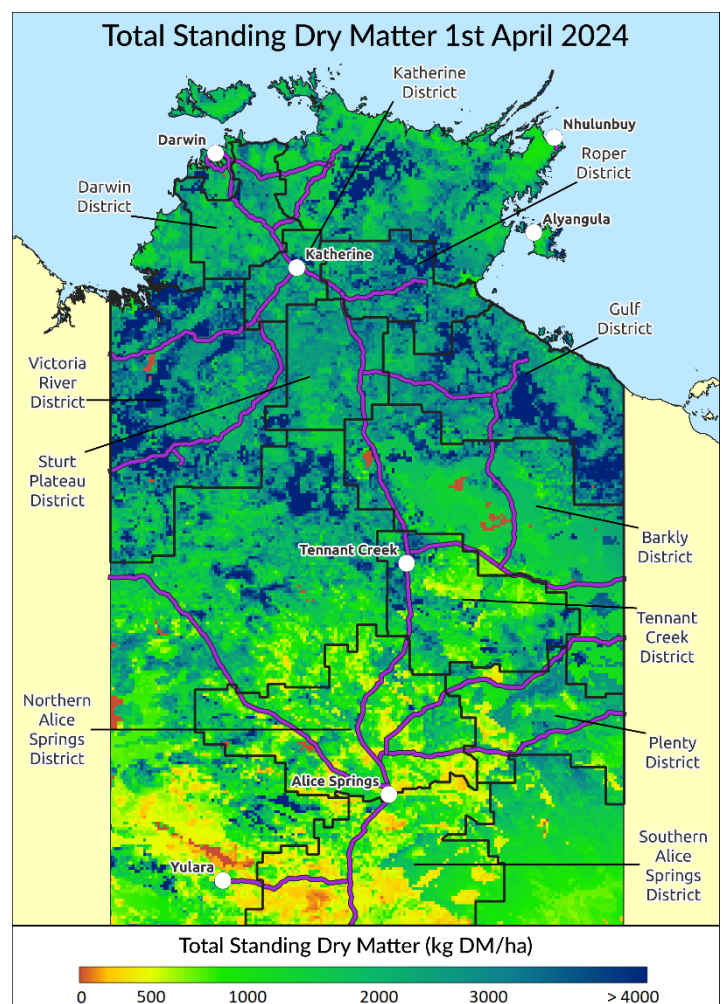
[Tennant Creek District](#)

[Northern Alice Springs District](#)

[Plenty District](#)

[Southern Alice Springs District](#)

For further information about this Outlook, please contact Chris Materne on 08 8951 8135.



Summary of current situation and trends – all districts – April 2024

Monsoonal activity brought above average rainfall to the Top End and VRD during January with the Victoria River catchment in particular experiencing significant flooding. Tropical Cyclone Lincoln led to widespread rain to the Gulf, Barkly, VRD & Sturt Plateau. Tropical Cyclone Megan brought further heavy rain and flooding to parts of the Gulf and northern Barkly and 150-300mm across the northern Alice Springs district. Much of the southern NT received below average rainfall during January & February.

Modelled pasture growth predictions over the next 3 months indicate low pasture growth for most of the northern districts with the exception of some high growth in the southern VRD, Roper & Gulf. This is expected in high rainfall years when available soil nitrogen becomes limiting to growth despite high soil moisture. Large areas of very high growth is predicted for much of the Barkly, Tennant Creek and southern pastoral districts, particularly Northern Alice Springs in response to the mid to late March high rainfall. However, areas of seasonally limited growth are still likely for parts of the southern districts.

The latest El Niño event has officially ended, with The Bureau of Meteorology declaring an inactive ENSO phase which is likely to continue for the next few months. While the MJO is currently weak or indiscernable, climate models suggest a weak pulse could emerge in the western Pacific later in April, before moving towards the Western Hemisphere, away from the Australian tropics. Longer range forecasting suggests that warmer than average temperatures are likely throughout the NT from May to July. As expected at this time of year, the chance of exceeding median rainfall is low over the tropics, though wetter than average conditions are possible for parts of the southern NT.

The fire risk has decreased across the NT since the previous quarter and is currently low in all districts.

KEY

Green = low risk

Orange = watch

Red = high risk

KEY

↑ = increasing trend

↓ = decreasing trend

↔ = steady

Northern Territory Pastoral Districts

Indicator	Darwin	Katherine	VRD	Sturt Plateau	Roper	Gulf	Barkly	Tennant Creek	Northern Alice Springs	Plenty	Southern Alice Springs	Comments
2023/24 total pasture growth	↔	↔	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↔	↑	↔	Arrows indicate trend compared to the long-term median (for this time of year)
Current estimated standing biomass	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↔	↑	↔	Arrows indicate trend since previous quarter
Current fire risk	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	Arrows indicate the trend since previous quarter
Current seasonal outlook	↔	↔	↑	↔	↔	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	Arrows indicate the trend since previous quarter and taking into account the forecasted model predictions

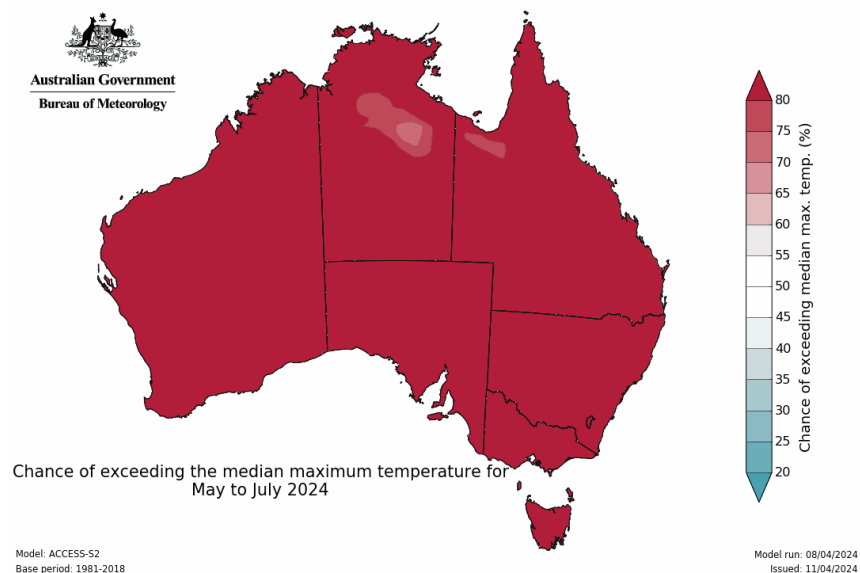
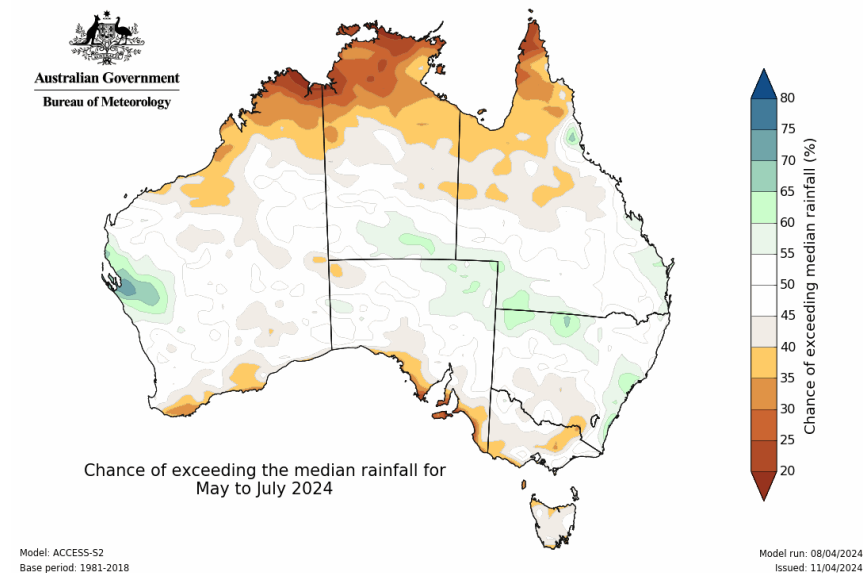
Northern Territory Seasonal Outlook as at April 2024*

Sourced from the Australian Bureau of Meteorology (BoM)

*This seasonal outlook was correct at the time of publication. For the most up-to-date seasonal outlook, please go to the [Climate Outlook](#) section of the BoM website.

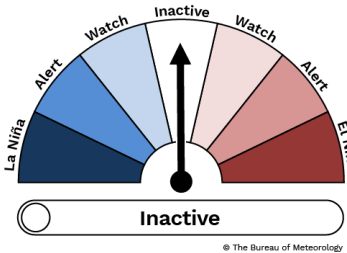
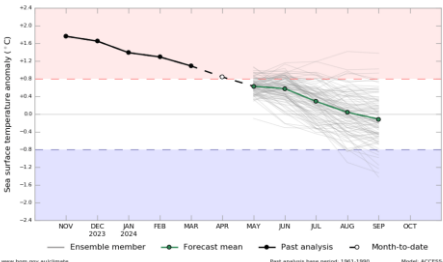
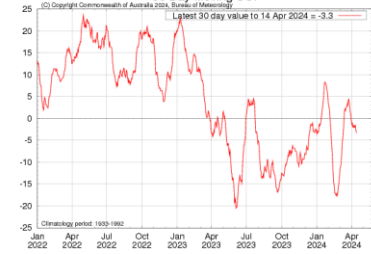
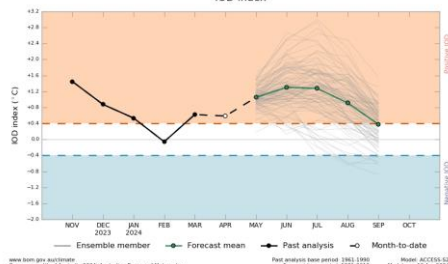
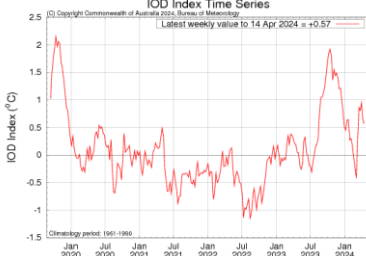
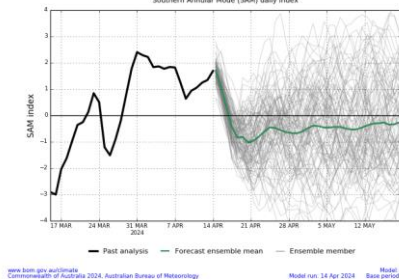
The BoM outlook for May to July 2024 indicates that:

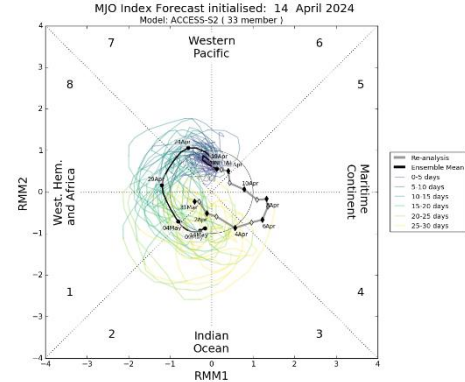
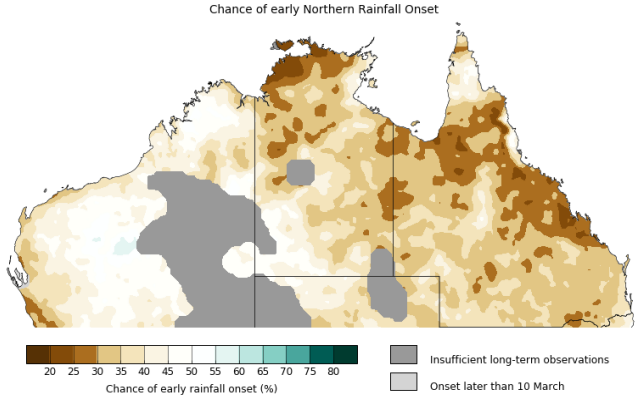
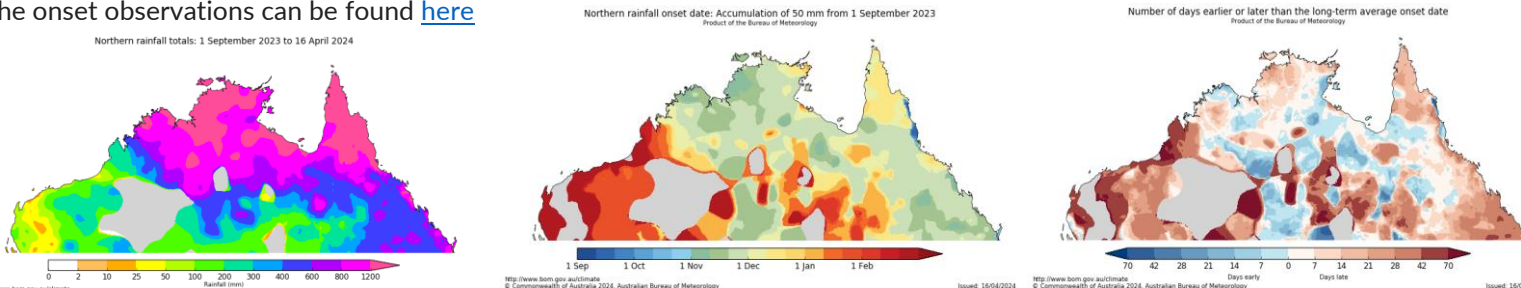
- The chance of exceeding the median rainfall between May to July is low across the Top End (where rainfall is usually low at this time of year). There is an average to above average chance of exceeding median rainfall for most of the southern NT. Past outlook accuracy is moderate (55-70%) over most of the NT with low accuracy (0-50%) over the northern VRD & Sturt Plateau.
- **Warmer** than average days over the next 3 months are likely across the entire NT with moderate to high past accuracy (50-100%).
- **Warmer** than average nights are also likely for the whole of the NT with high past outlook accuracy (55-100%), though the chance of exceeding median minimum temperatures is slightly lower south of Alice Springs.



Influencing Climate drivers

- This forecast reflects the status and forecasts for several climate drivers, including an inactive El Niño and a neutral Indian Ocean Dipole.

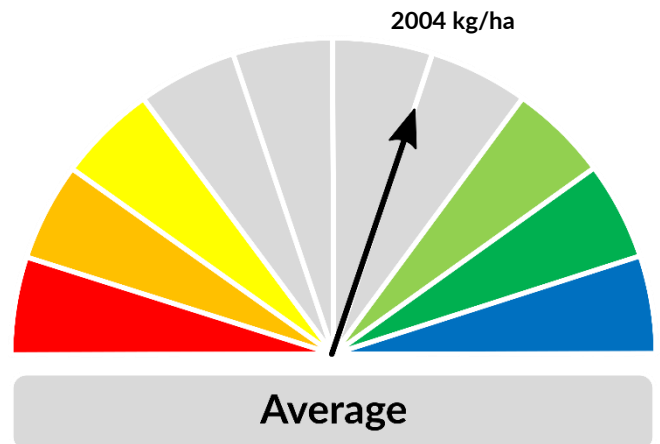
<div>Climate Influences</div> <div><div>El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO)</div><div>ENSO status: El Niño inactive</div><div><p>© The Bureau of Meteorology</p></div><div>Pacific Ocean Update (As at 16 April 2024) Next Update: 30 April 2024</div></div>	<div>Comments (sourced from the Australian Bureau of Meteorology)</div> <div><div><div>The El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO) has returned to neutral.</div><div>Sea surface temperatures in the central Pacific have been steadily cooling since December 2023, with significant cooling over the last fortnight.</div><div>Surveyed climate models suggest that ENSO levels will likely continue to be neutral until at least July 2024.</div></div><div></div><div>To see larger versions of these images, go to the Forecast and SOI tabs at Pacific Ocean Update</div></div>
<div><div>Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD)</div><div>Current outlook: Neutral</div><div>Indian Ocean Update (As at 16 April 2024) Next Update: 30 April 2024</div></div>	<div><div><div>The Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) is currently neutral.</div><div>Although the most recent value of the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) index (+0.57 °C) is above the positive IOD threshold, the IOD is currently neutral.</div><div>All surveyed international climate models suggest a return to positive IOD values in May, however confidence in IOD model forecasts beyond autumn is low at this time of year. A positive IOD phase typically sees below average winter/spring rainfall in Australia.</div></div><div></div><div>To see larger versions of these images, go to the Outlook tab and IOD Time Series</div></div>
<div><div>Southern Annular Mode (SAM)</div><div>Current outlook: Positive</div><div>Southern Ocean Update (As at 16 April 2024) Next Update: 30 April 2024</div></div>	<div><div><div>The SAM is currently positive, but becoming neutral.</div><div>Forecasts indicate the SAM is likely to become neutral over the next week and remain neutral until the end of April.</div><div>A neutral SAM during autumn typically has no strong effect on Australian climatic conditions or rainfall patterns.</div></div><div></div><div>To see larger versions of these images, go to the Outlook tab and Southern Ocean Update</div></div>

Seasonal Indicator	Comments (sourced from the Australian Bureau of Meteorology & the NT Department of Industry, Tourism & Trade)
<p>Madden–Julian Oscillation (MJO)</p> <p>Outlook: Weak</p> <p>Tropics Update</p> <p>(As at 16 April 2024)</p> <p>Next Update: 30 April 2024</p>	<p>The current MJO pulse is currently weak or indiscernible.</p> <p>Most climate models indicate the MJO will remain indiscernible for the coming week, possibly emerging as a weak pulse in the western Pacific over the next fortnight. Following this, it is forecast to move towards the Western Hemisphere and Africa, away from the Australian tropics.</p> <p>A positive MJO in the western Pacific at this time of year typically leads to enhanced shower & thunderstorm activity over northern Australia.</p> <p>The MJO has its greatest effect on the tropical areas of Australia during summer, and is not expected to have a major influence on the NT over the dry season/winter months.</p> 
<p>Wet Season Onset</p> <p>Outlook 2023/24: Late</p> <p>Northern Rainfall Onset Outlook</p> <p>(As at 31 Aug 2023)</p> <p>Next Update: 27 June 2024</p>	<p>A later than normal start to the 2023/24 wet season was experienced over parts of the NT.</p> <p>As predicted, much of the NT had a later than usual start to the 2023/2024 wet season- especially the northern coast & north-west Top End. However, parts of the Gulf & Barkly districts as well as the south-west NT experienced earlier than usual rainfall onset.</p> <p>The northern rainfall onset date occurs when the rainfall total reaches 50 mm since the 1st of September. It is considered approximately the amount of rainfall required to stimulate plant growth.</p> 
<p>Observations 2022/23: Late</p> <p>(As at 16 April 2024)</p>	<p>The onset observations can be found here</p> 

Darwin District

- Pasture growth was slightly **above average** over most of the district with **higher** growth in the south west and small areas of **low** growth scattered across the rest of the district.
- Relative biomass levels are **low** where fires removed standing dry matter in the previous season, to **average** across the district.
- Over the next three months, the chance of exceeding the median growth across much of the district is also **low** to **average** with pasture growth typically finished by this time of year.
- Less than 1% of the district has burnt since 1 January 2024.

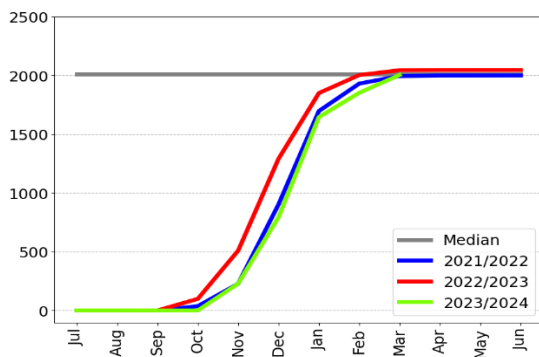
2023/24 Pasture Growth



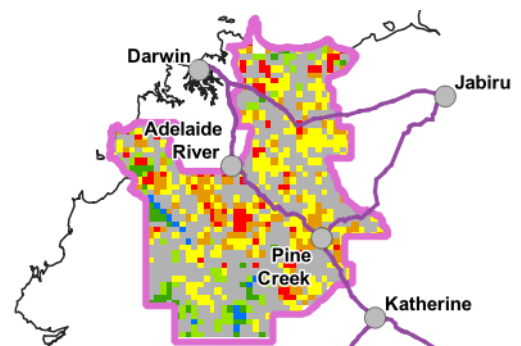
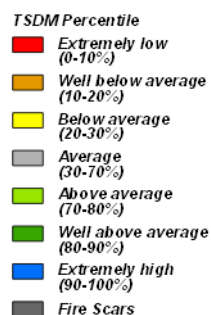
As at 1 April 2024

(% of district)	<1,000kg/ha	1,000 - 2,000kg/ha	2,000 - 3,000kg/ha	>3,000kg/ha
2023/2024 Pasture Growth	0%	50%	47%	3%
Total Standing Dry Matter	0%	37%	54%	9%

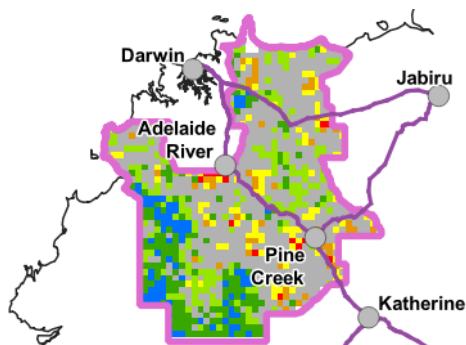
Median Pasture Growth (kg/ha) (Running Total)



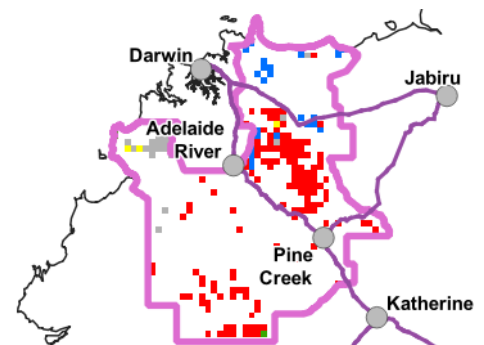
Total Standing Dry Matter at 1 April 2024 Relative to Historical Records (1957-now)



6-month Pasture Growth at 1 April 2024 Relative to Historical Records (1957-now)



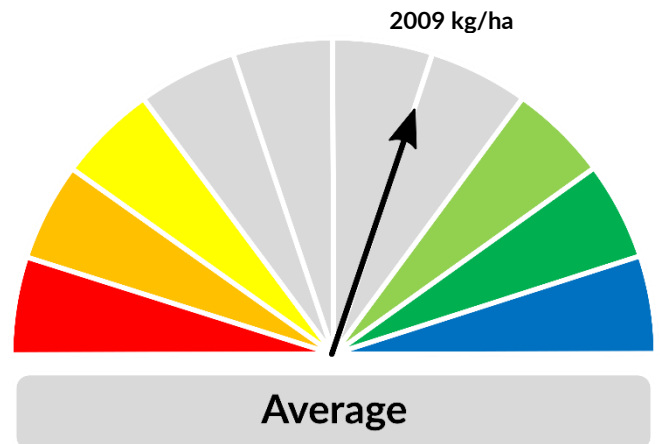
Chance of Exceeding Median Pasture Growth April 2024 - July 2024



Katherine District

- The Katherine district had **average to above average** pasture growth for this time of year with some very **high** growth in the central west of the district.
- Biomass levels across the district range from **low** where burnt in the previous season to **above average**.
- Over the next three months, the chance of exceeding the median growth is **low** over much of the district due to limited available soil nitrogen, with some areas of **high** growth possible in the south west.
- There have been no fires in the district since 1 January 2024.

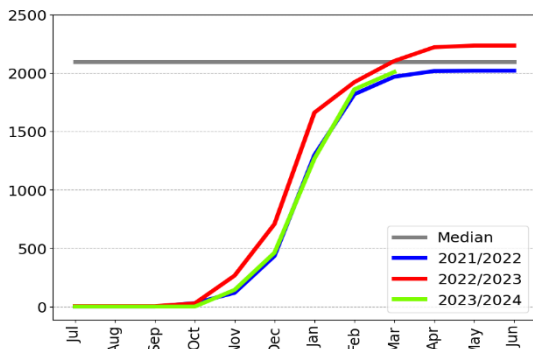
2023/24 Pasture Growth



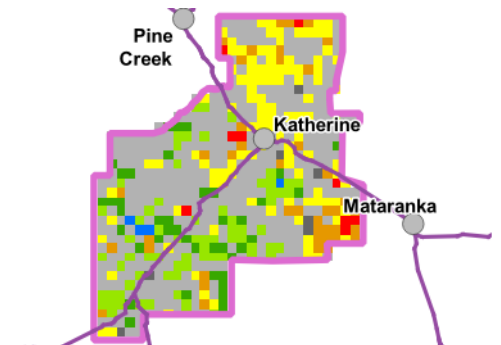
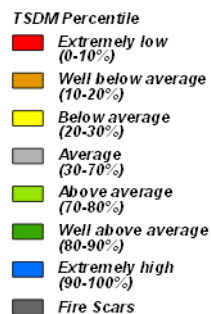
As at 1 April 2024

(% of district)	<1,000kg/ha	1,000 - 2,000kg/ha	2,000 - 3,000kg/ha	>3,000kg/ha
2023/2024 Pasture Growth	0%	49%	50%	1%
Total Standing Dry Matter	0%	20%	64%	16%

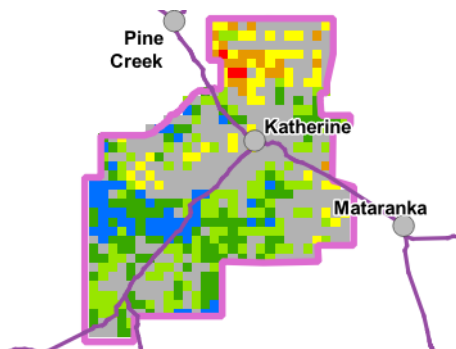
Median Pasture Growth (kg/ha) (Running Total)



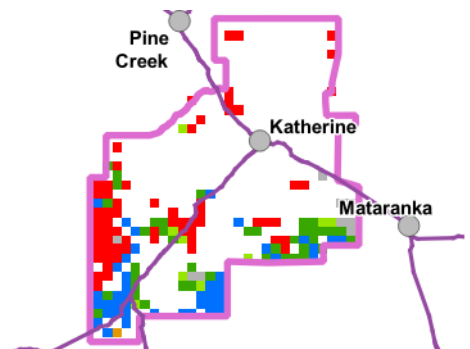
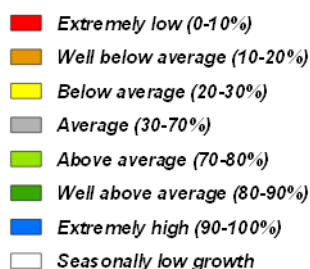
Total Standing Dry Matter at 1 April 2024 Relative to Historical Records (1957-now)



6-month Pasture Growth at 1 April 2024 Relative to Historical Records (1957-now)



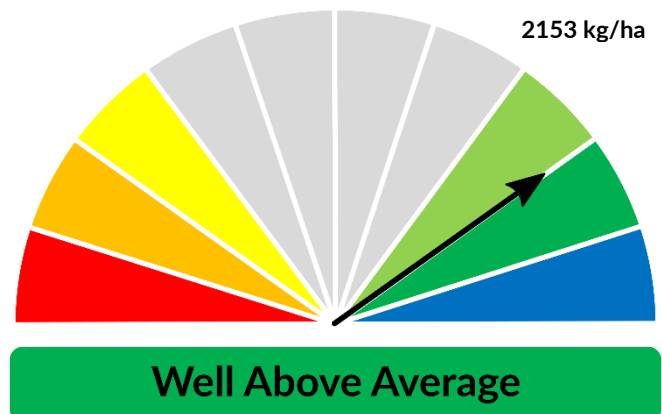
Chance of Exceeding Median Pasture Growth April 2024 - July 2024



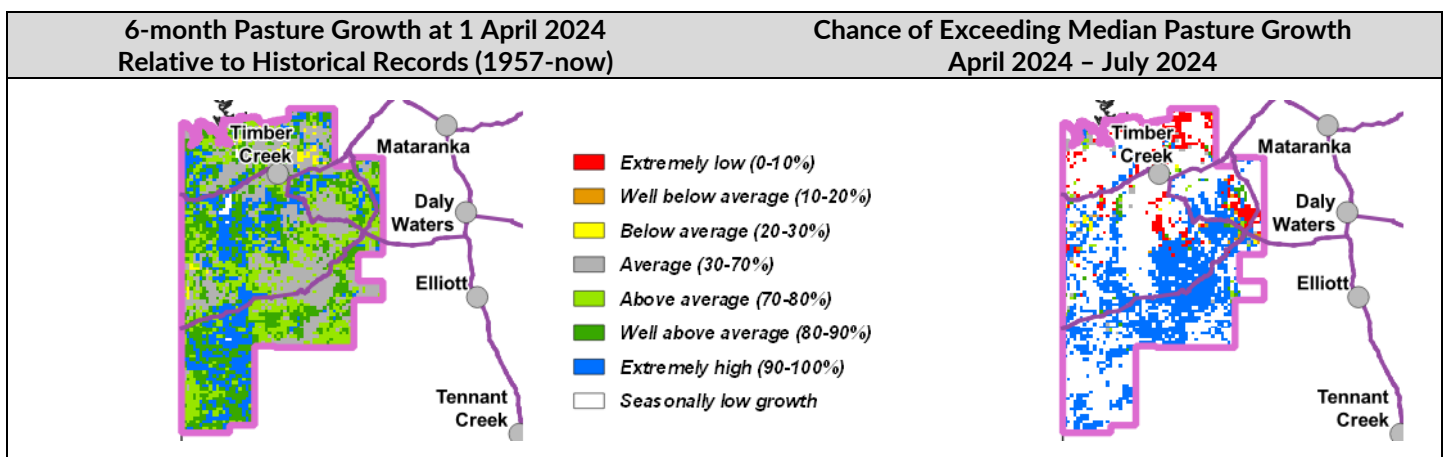
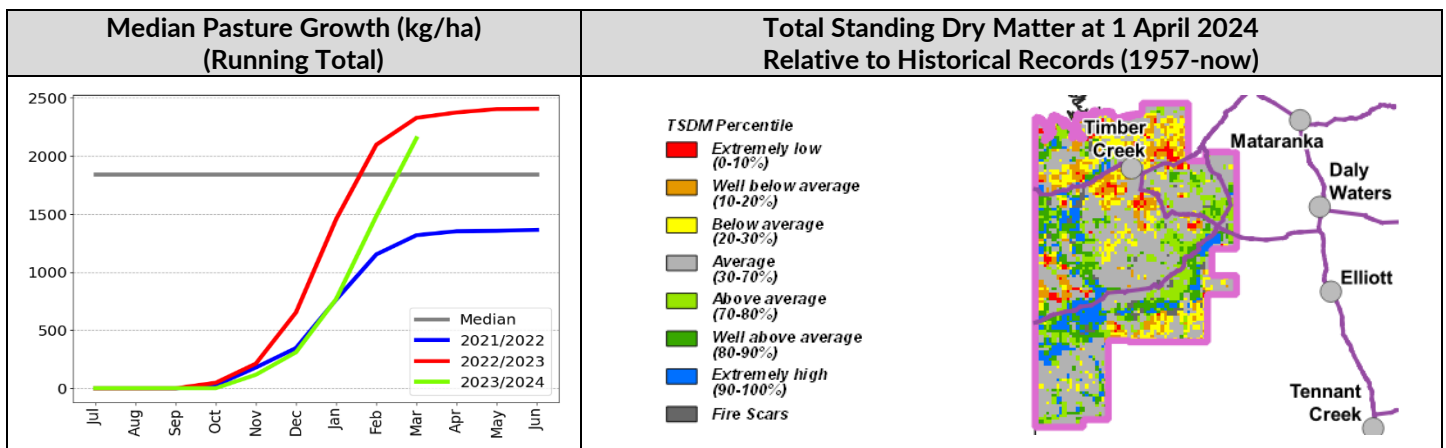
Victoria River District

- Pasture growth for this stage of the 2023/2024 season is **average** to **very high** over most of the district.
- Relative pasture biomass levels are patchy across the district, varying from **low** following fire in the previous season, to **very high**.
- Over the next three months the pasture growth will be seasonally **low** (usually no growth this time of year) over much of the district, scattered with areas of **very high** growth likely.
- Less than 1% of the district has burnt since 1 January 2024.

2023/24 Pasture Growth



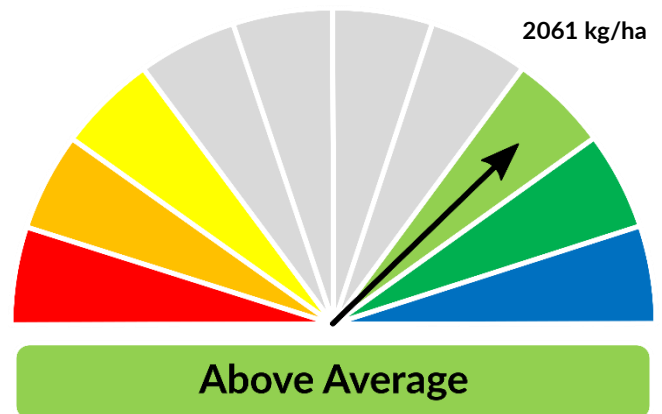
As at 1 April 2024				
(% of district)	<1,000kg/ha	1,000 - 2,000kg/ha	2,000 - 3,000kg/ha	>3,000kg/ha
2023/2024 Pasture Growth	1%	39%	54%	6%
Total Standing Dry Matter	<1%	13%	47%	40%



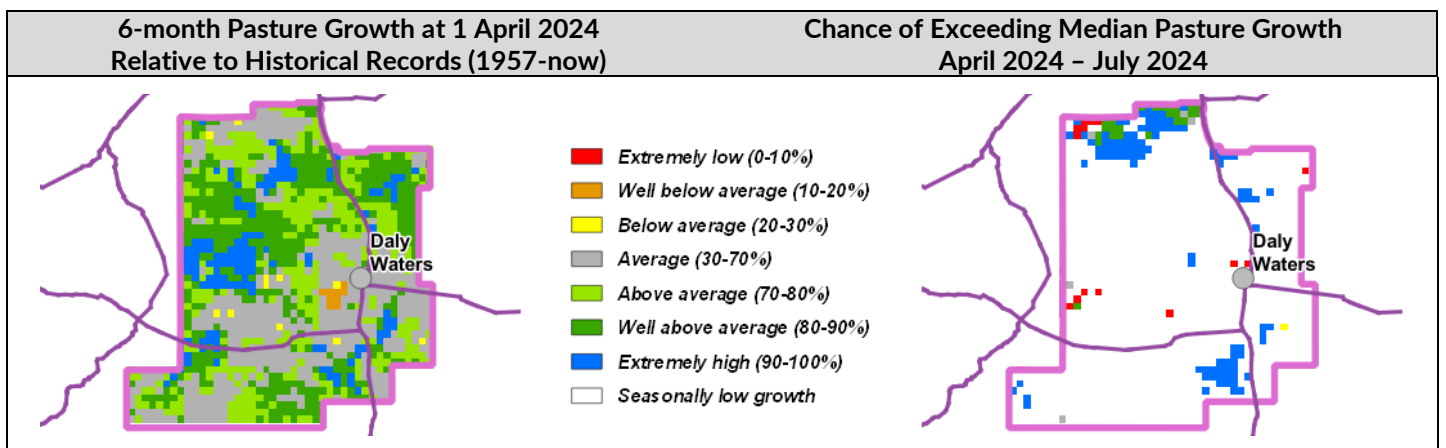
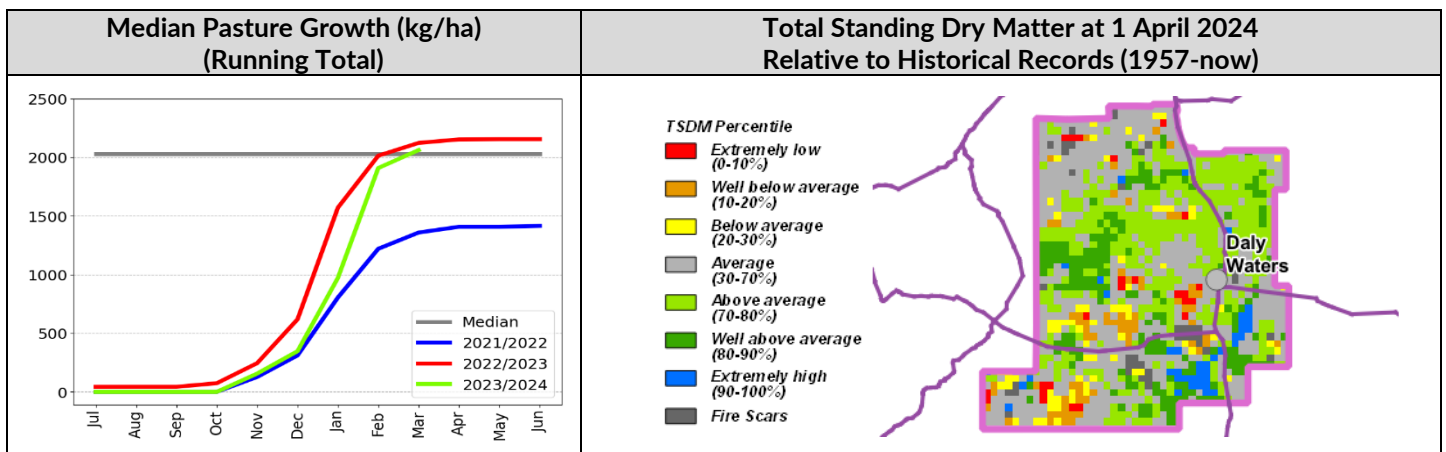
Sturt Plateau District

- The Sturt Plateau had **average** to **high** pasture growth across most of the district.
- Pasture biomass levels are generally **average** to **high** across the district, with some **low** levels in the south west. This is likely due to fires removing previous standing dry matter.
- Over the next three months the chance of exceeding median growth is seasonally **low** over most of the district. Isolated areas of **very high** growth are possible particularly in the north and east of the district.
- Less than 1% of the district has burnt since 1 January 2024.

2023/24 Pasture Growth



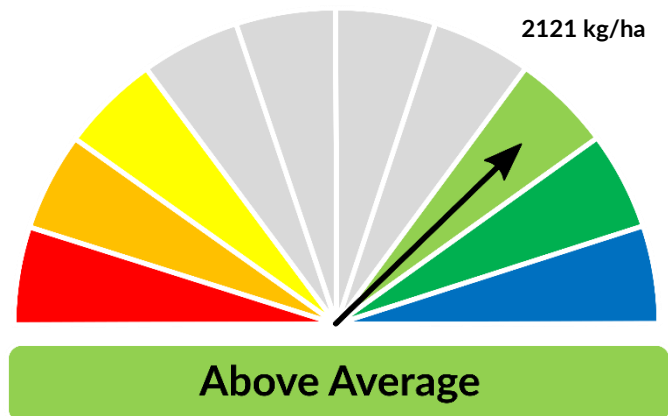
As at 1 April 2024				
(% of district)	<1,000kg/ha	1,000 - 2,000kg/ha	2,000 - 3,000kg/ha	>3,000kg/ha
2023/2024 Pasture Growth	0%	43%	57%	<1%
Total Standing Dry Matter	0%	14%	73%	13%



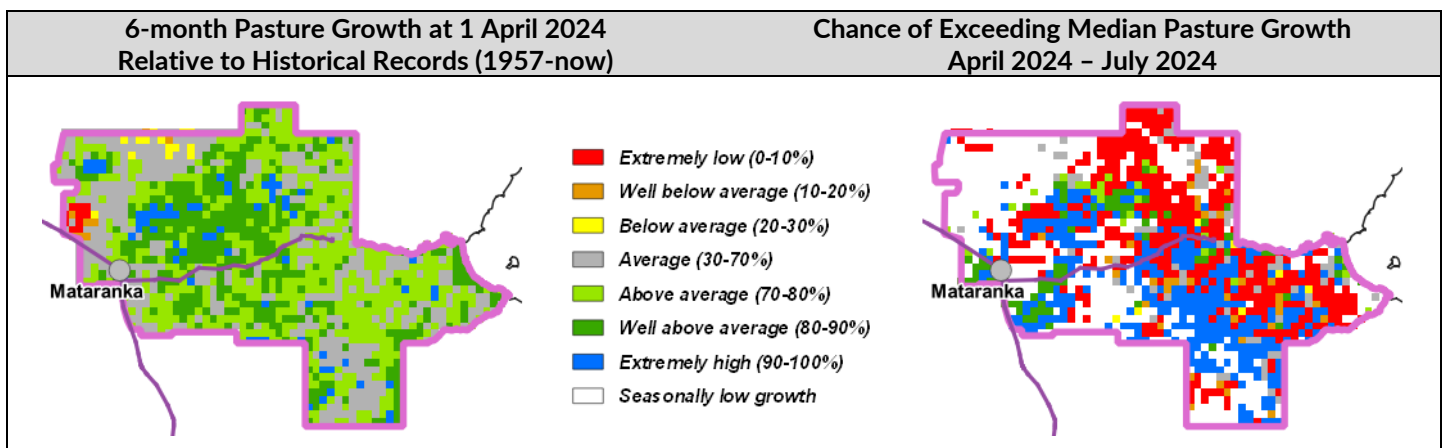
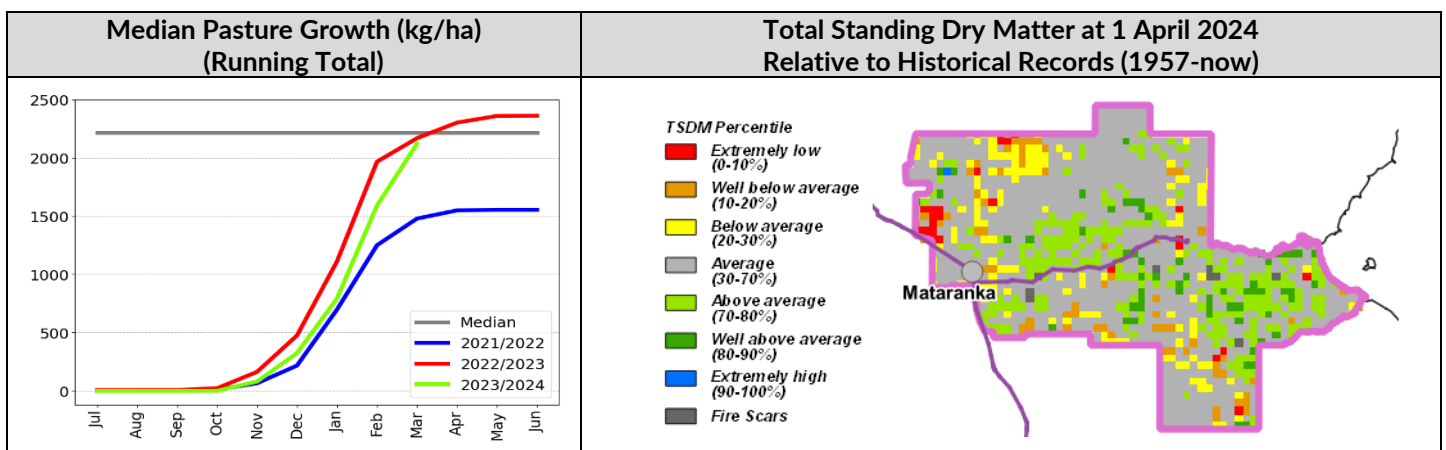
Roper District

- Pasture growth across most of the district is **average** to **very high** for this stage of the 2023/2024 season with some isolated **low** growth in the north west.
- Pasture biomass levels vary from **low** to **above average** across the district.
- Over the next three months the chance of exceeding median growth is **low** across much of the district due to limited available soil nitrogen. Scattered areas of **very high** growth are possible across the southern half of the district.
- There have been no fires in the district since 1 January 2024.

2023/24 Pasture Growth



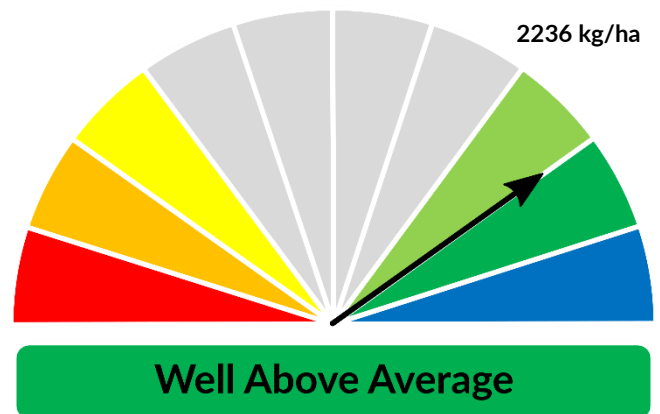
As at 1 April 2024				
(% of district)	<1,000kg/ha	1,000 - 2,000kg/ha	2,000 - 3,000kg/ha	>3,000kg/ha
2023/2024 Pasture Growth	1%	40%	57%	2%
Total Standing Dry Matter	0%	9%	55%	36%



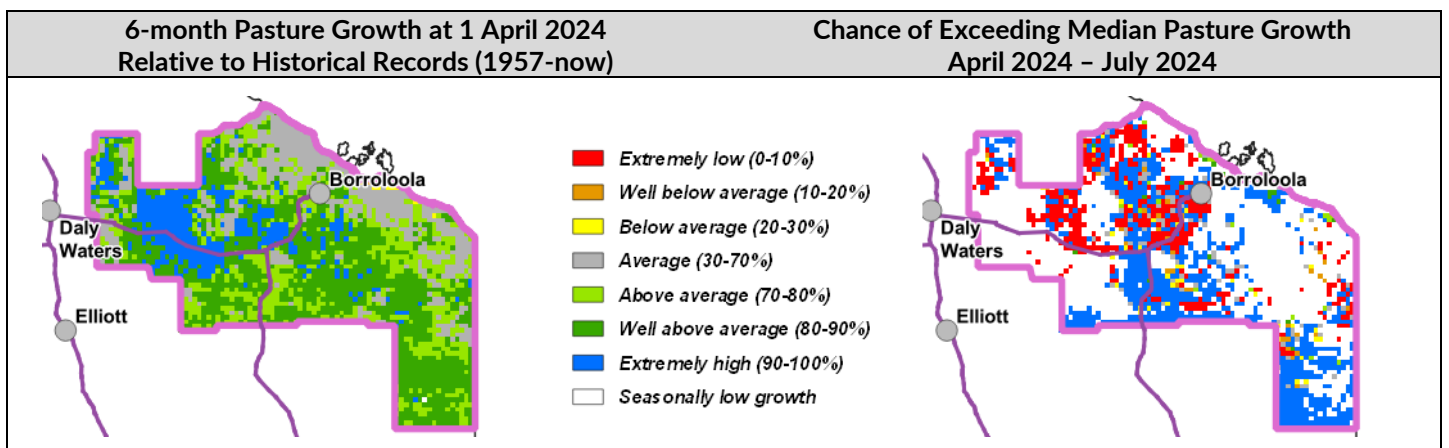
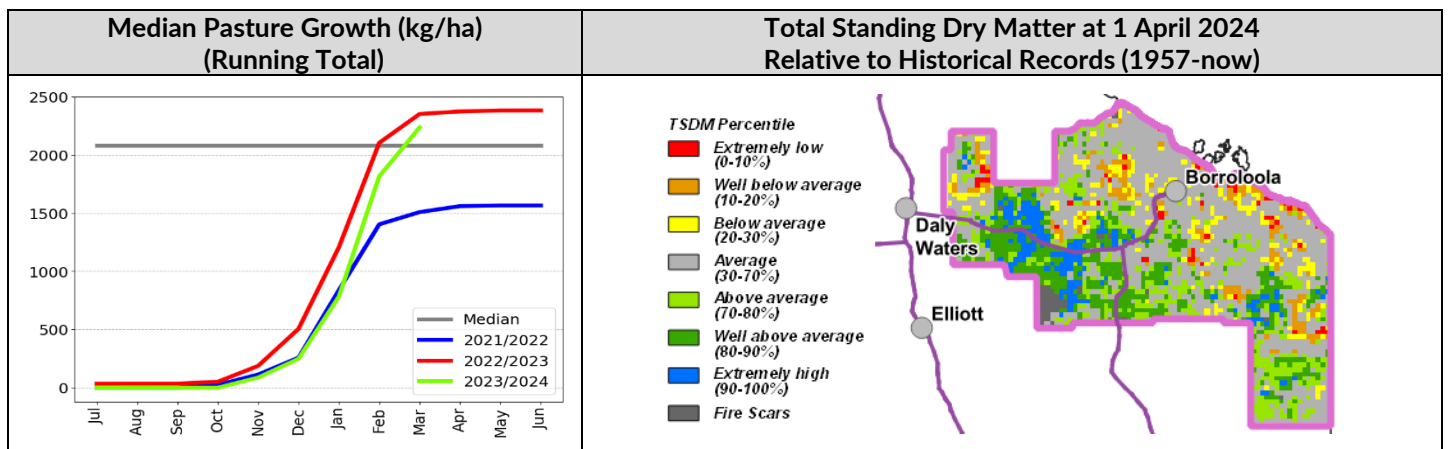
Gulf District

- Pasture growth for this stage of the 2023/2024 season is **average** to **very high** across most of the district.
- Pasture biomass levels varied from **below average** in areas with fire last season to **above average** across much of the district, with parts of the western region at **very high** levels.
- Over the next three months most the district either has a **low** chance of exceeding median growth due to limited available soil nitrogen, or growth is usually low this time of year. Areas of **very high** growth are possible, particularly in the south of the district.
- There have been no fires in the Gulf district since 1 January 2024.

2023/24 Pasture Growth



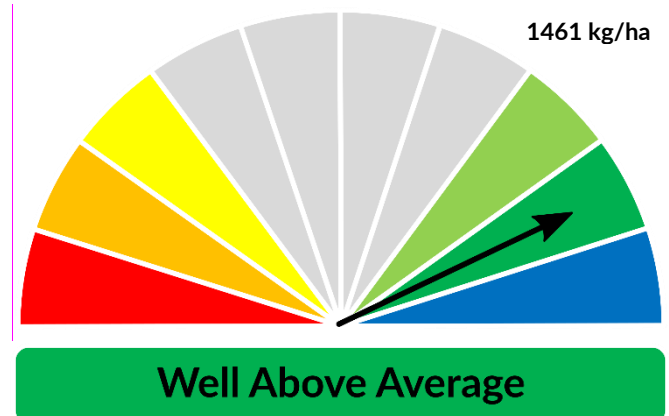
As at 1 April 2024				
(% of district)	<1,000kg/ha	1,000 - 2,000kg/ha	2,000 - 3,000kg/ha	>3,000kg/ha
2023/2024 Pasture Growth	<1%	27%	70%	3%
Total Standing Dry Matter	<1%	8%	53%	39%



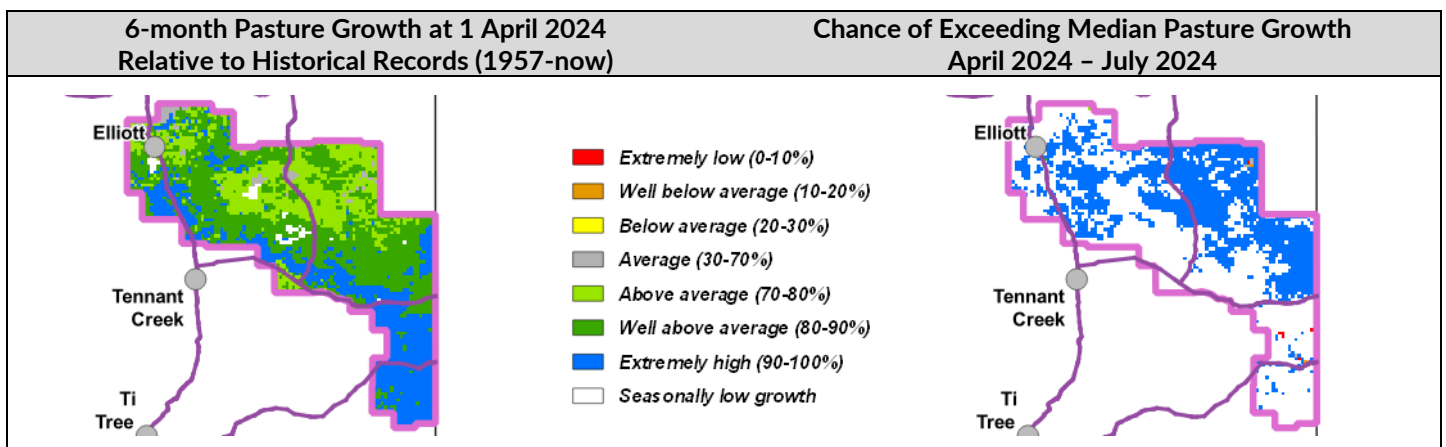
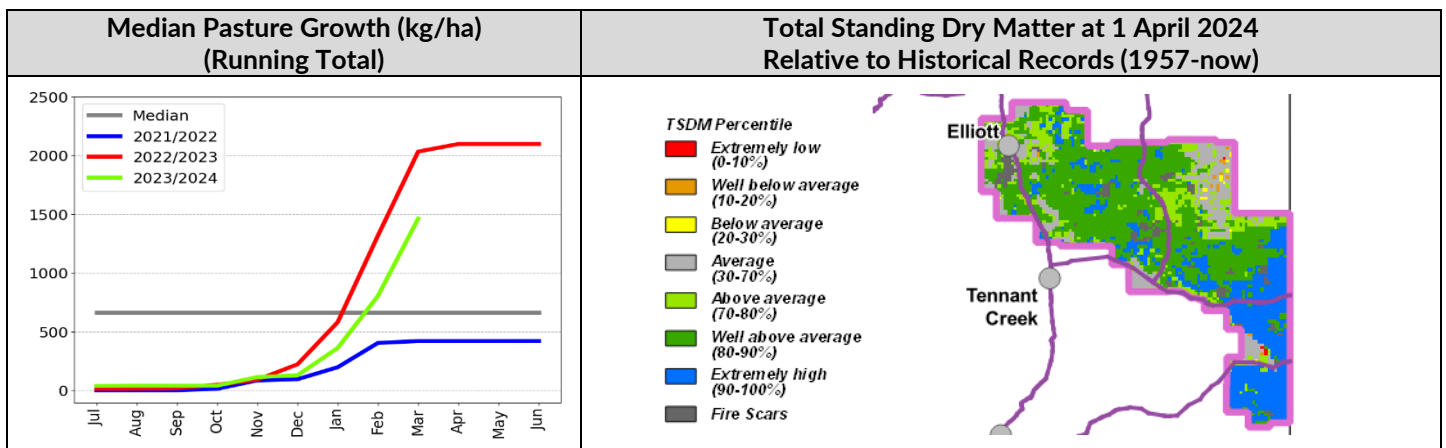
Barkly District

- Most of the Barkly district had **above average** to **very high** pasture growth, particularly in the southern part of the district.
- Pasture biomass levels are **average** to **high** across most of the district with some **very high** levels in the south of the district.
- Over the next three months pasture growth is likely to be **extremely high** across much of the district except in areas that have already had high growth and do not typically have pasture growth this time of year.
- Less than 1% of the district has burnt since 1 January 2024.

2023/24 Pasture Growth



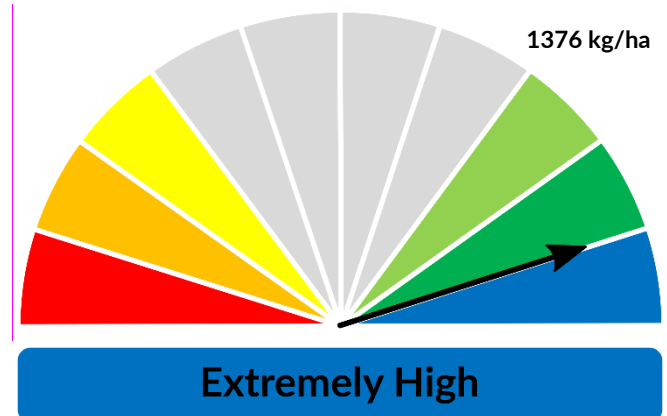
As at 1 April 2024				
(% of district)	<1,000kg/ha	1,000 - 2,000kg/ha	2,000 - 3,000kg/ha	>3,000kg/ha
2023/2024 Pasture Growth	8%	71%	21%	1%
Total Standing Dry Matter	4%	54%	30%	12%



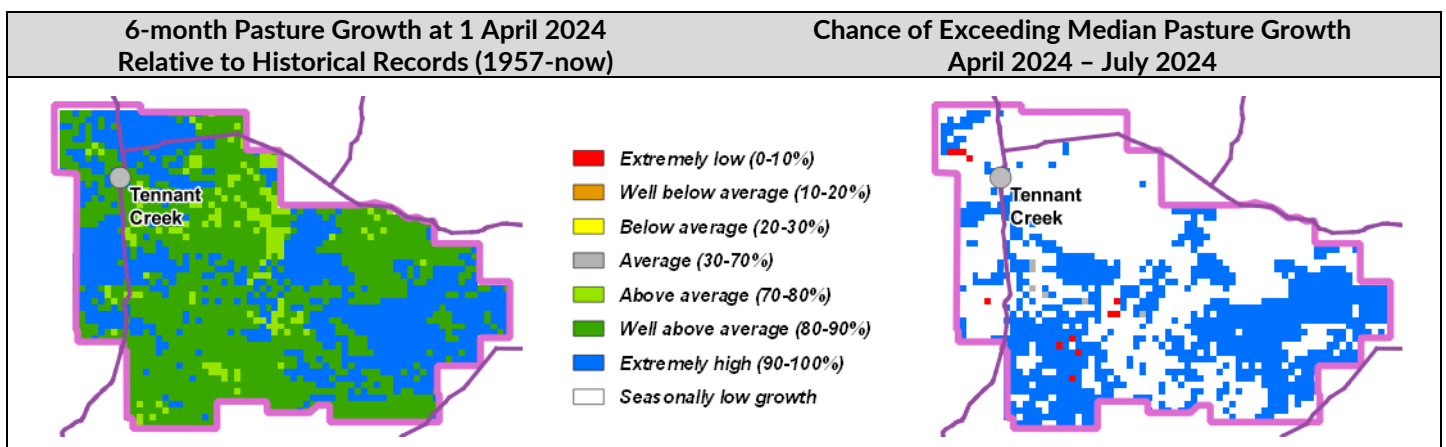
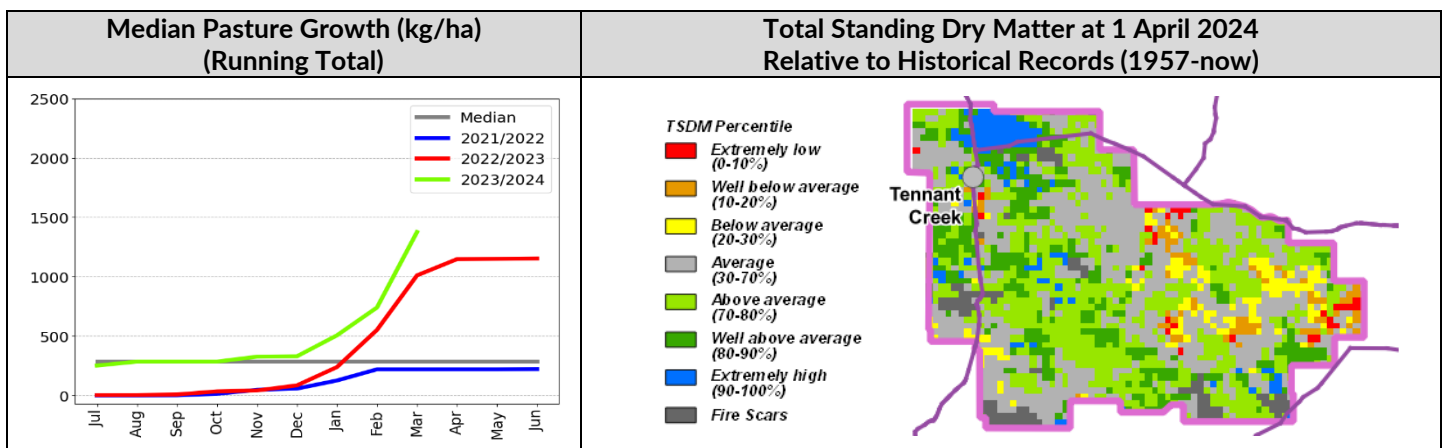
Tennant Creek District

- Pasture growth has been well **above average** to **very high** for this time of year across most of the district.
- Pasture biomass levels have been affected by widespread fires in late 2023 and are **average** across much of the district with **lower** levels in the east and **higher** yields in the north.
- Over the next three months growth is likely to be low across much of the district due to seasonal limitations. However, areas of **very high** growth are still likely, particularly in the southern half of the district.
- 1.2% of the district has burnt since 1 January 2024.

2023/24 Pasture Growth



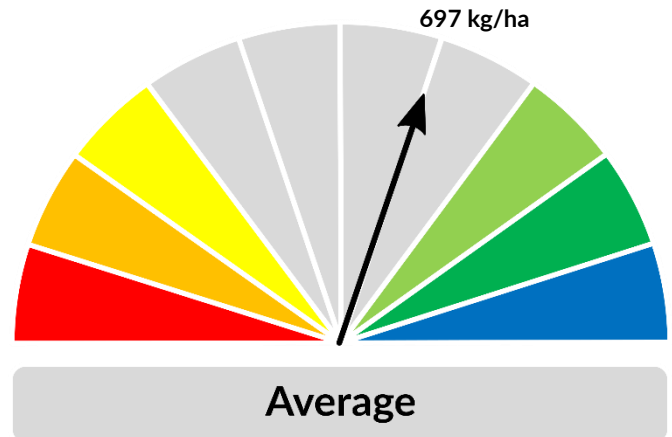
As at 1 April 2024				
(% of district)	<1,000kg/ha	1,000 - 2,000kg/ha	2,000 - 3,000kg/ha	>3,000kg/ha
2023/2024 Pasture Growth	14%	72%	13%	1%
Total Standing Dry Matter	4%	54%	30%	12%



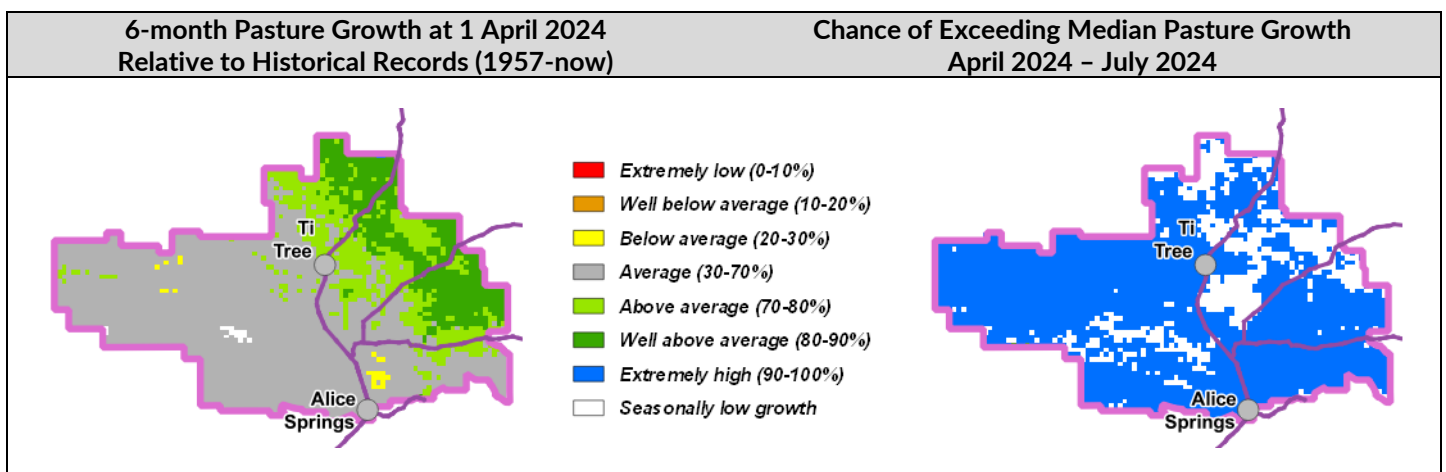
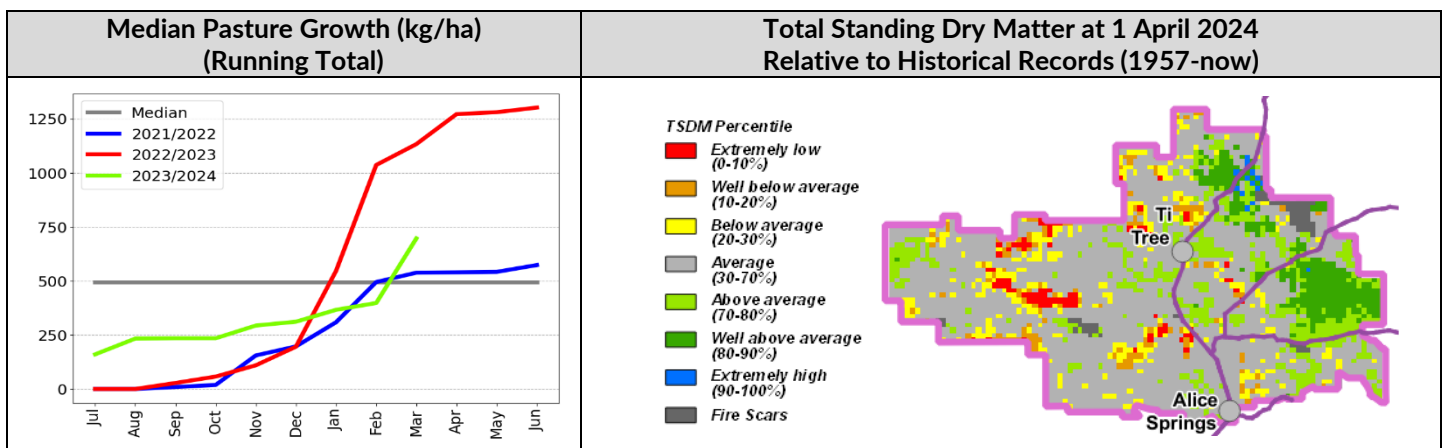
Northern Alice Springs District

- Pasture growth to the end of March was **average** to well **above average** over most of the district with the highest yields in the north-east of the district.
- Pasture biomass was also **low** to **average** over much of the district with some areas impacted by late 2023 fires. However, there were some **above average** biomass levels in the north & east of the district.
- Over the next three months, pasture growth is predicted to be **extremely high** for much of the district, due largely to the widespread falls of 150-300mm of rain in the region in March.
- Less than 1% of the district has burnt since 1 January 2024.

2023/24 Pasture Growth



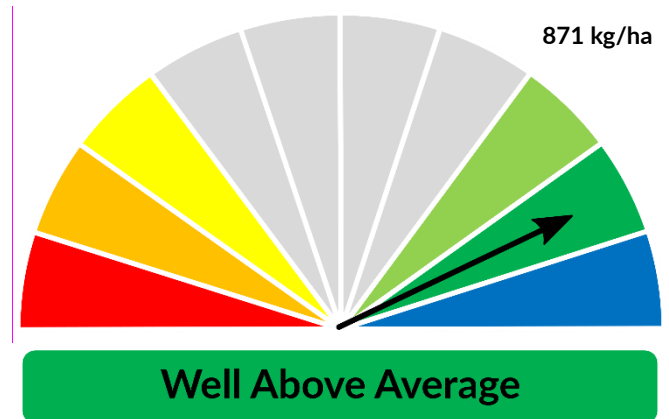
As at 1 April 2024				
(% of district)	<250kg/ha	250 - 500kg/ha	500 - 1,000kg/ha	>1,000kg/ha
2023/2024 Pasture Growth	4%	24%	43%	29%
Total Standing Dry Matter	1%	8%	30%	61%



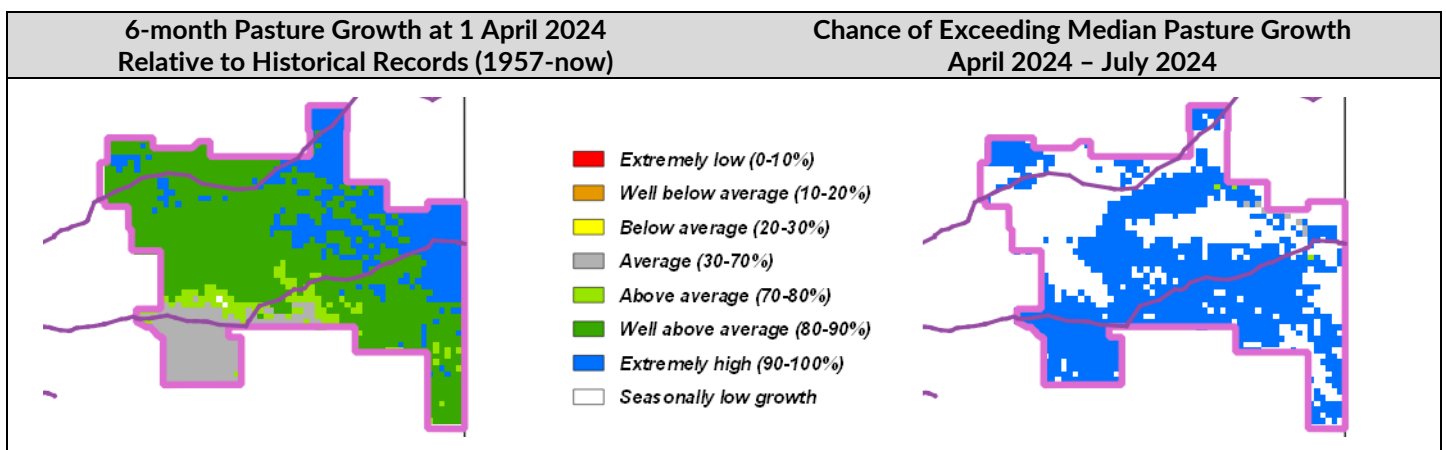
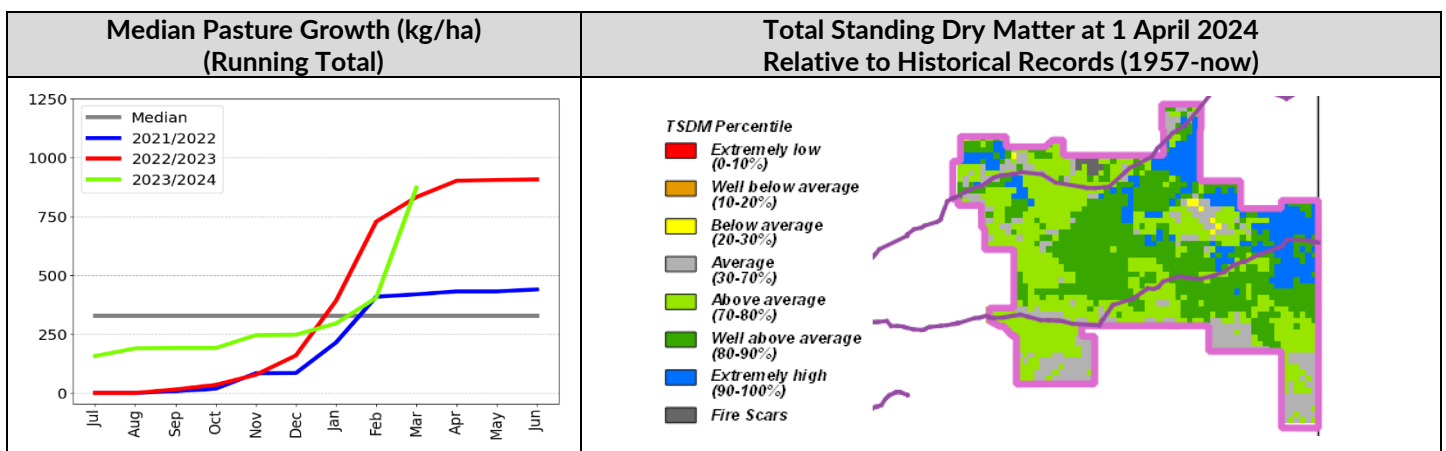
Plenty District

- Pasture growth was well **above average** across much of the district with some **extremely high** growth in the north-east, to **average** in the south-west.
- While large areas were impacted by the late 2023 fires, pasture biomass levels are still **average** to well **above average** across most of the district with some **very high** levels in the north-east.
- Over the next three months, pasture growth is likely to be **extremely high**, except for spinifex pastures that have already had high growth and likely reached nitrogen limitations.
- Less than 1% of the district has burnt since 1 January 2024.

2023/24 Pasture Growth



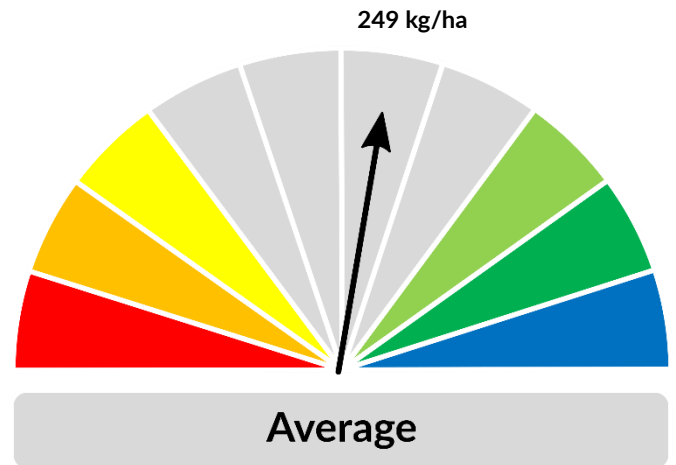
As at 1 April 2024				
(% of district)	<250kg/ha	250 - 500kg/ha	500 - 1,000kg/ha	>1,000kg/ha
2023/2024 Pasture Growth	3%	20%	33%	44%
Total Standing Dry Matter	<1%	5%	17%	78%



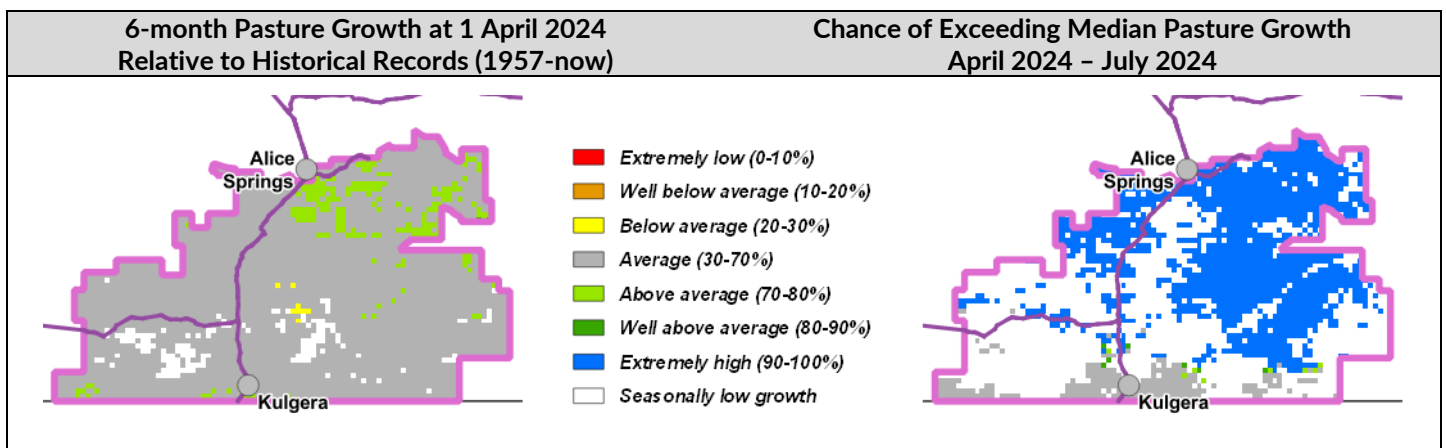
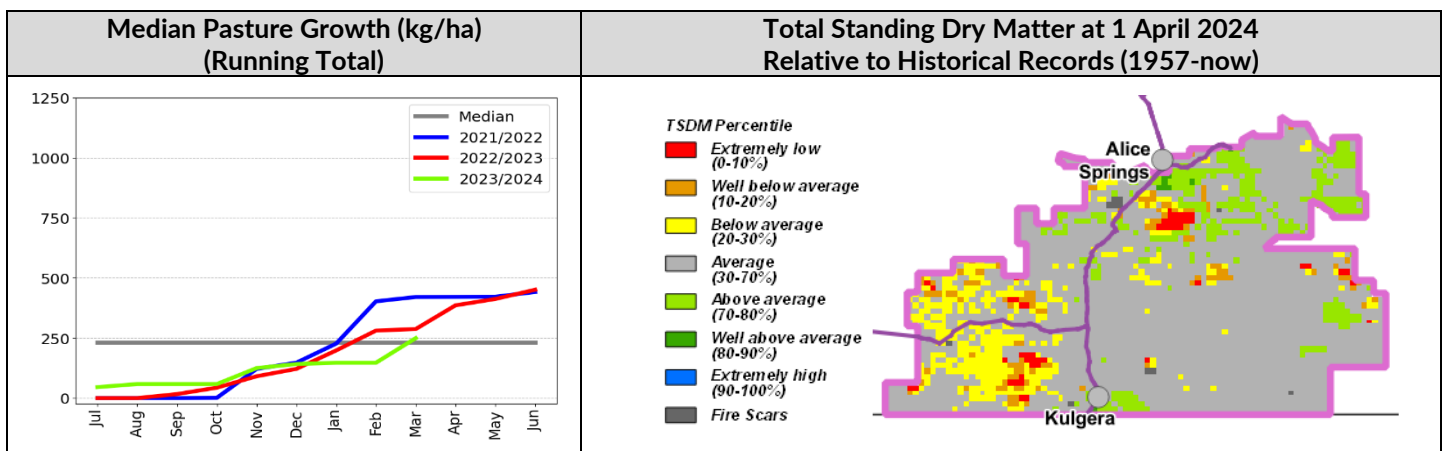
Southern Alice Springs District

- Pasture growth across most of the district has been **average** for this time of year, with some **above average** growth in the north-east.
- Relative pasture biomass varied across the district but was mostly **average** with more **below average** growth to the west and scattered areas of **above average** growth.
- Over the next three months, pasture growth is likely to be **low** to **average** for large parts of the district due to seasonal limitations. However, areas of extremely high growth are still possible, especially in the north-east.
- Less than 1% of the district has burnt since 1 January 2024.

2023/24 Pasture Growth



As at 1 April 2024				
(% of district)	<250kg/ha	250 - 500kg/ha	500 - 1,000kg/ha	>1,000kg/ha
2023/2024 Pasture Growth	50%	40%	10%	<1%
Total Standing Dry Matter	7%	27%	32%	34%



Pasture information

The pasture and fire information in this document is derived from AussieGRASS. AussieGRASS is a model that simulates pasture growth and standing biomass using climate data, vegetation mapping, fire history and regional estimates of grazing pressure. The model can be used to track simulated pasture growth and total standing pasture biomass at the landscape scale.

Note that the model does not use stocking rate data for individual properties. Where stock numbers are significantly higher or lower than typical for a district, model estimates of total standing dry matter may be erroneous.

Disclaimer

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