Reef protection regulations in the Great Barrier Reef regions
Grazing requirements
Effective from 1 December 2019

The Reef protection regulations started on 1 December 2019 and will be rolled out over the next three years.

The new regulations address land-based sources of water pollution to the Great Barrier Reef. This includes all industrial and agricultural activities that release nutrients and sediment across the Cape York, Wet Tropics, Burdekin, Mackay Whitsunday, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary regions.

Why are regulations required for grazing?
Over time, unsustainable grazing practices reduce pasture and ground cover which increases the risk of valuable top soil being lost when it rains. Reduced ground cover also increases overland flow causing gully and streambank erosion and sediment and nutrient run-off to waterways.

Ground cover is a key indicator of land condition and refers to pasture plants, plant litter, tree leaf litter, twigs and woody debris that can protect the soil surface from erosion.

The minimum practice agricultural standards for grazing focus on retaining and improving ground cover and land condition to minimise soil loss.

The Queensland Government has made a commitment that the minimum practice agricultural standards will remain substantially unchanged for the next five years.

What are the requirements for graziers?
Under the new Reef protection regulations, all graziers in the Wet Tropics, Burdekin, Mackay Whitsunday, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary regions will be required to:

- keep general records from 1 December 2019, for example of fertilisers applied to land
- comply with minimum practice agricultural standards as this requirement is applied to each region over the next three years.

Why is the Cape York region excluded from most of the new requirements?
Most of the new requirements do not apply to producers in the Cape York region as the region has met its water quality targets.

However, from 1 June 2021 (deferred from 1 June 2020), any new or expanded commercial cropping and horticulture activities in the Cape York region on five hectares or more that does not meet the cropping history test will require an environmental authority (permit) before the activity or any work takes place.

What records do I need to keep?
All graziers will be required to keep general records from 1 December 2019 and then minimum standard records as the minimum practice agricultural standards are rolled out across each region.

Records can be in any format but must be made within three business days, kept for at least six years and be available when requested by an authorised person such as a compliance officer.

Records need to be kept to demonstrate activities are being undertaken on the property in accordance with the minimum agricultural practice standards.

The government has committed to not commencing the regulation to acquire specific agricultural data
from the broader agricultural sector, such as data about fertiliser and chemical use, soil testing and crop yield.

For a full description of the record keeping requirements for graziers, please refer to the Agricultural ERA standard for beef cattle grazing available at www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations

General records

For graziers, general records must include:

- name of the grazier (i.e. the person(s) carrying out the activity)
- name of person making the record
- company name (if applicable)
- property address/es
- postal address
- farm identification number/s (if applicable)
- a list of the lots included in all the farms within the agricultural enterprise
- records of agricultural chemicals, fertiliser and mill mud/mill ash applied and specifically:
  - location of each application (e.g. farm number with block name or management zone)
  - date of each application
  - agricultural chemical and/or fertiliser product (including mill mud/mill ash) applied to each location with product name, application rate (kg/ha, L/ha or tonnes/ha for mill mud/mill ash) and for fertiliser product percentage of nitrogen and phosphorus.

Minimum standard records

For graziers, minimum standard records must include notes about the measures taken to retain or improve land condition. Specifically, records must include:

- details of the measures taken
- date the measures were implemented
- location on the property (relevant paddock) or whole property where the measures were implemented.

What minimum practice agricultural standards do I need to comply with?

The minimum practice agricultural standards for graziers do not mandate any particular action or measures. Instead graziers are required to determine their own actions to retain or improve land condition.

Under the new regulations, graziers are required to take action where land is in poor or degraded condition. Land condition is measured by the amount of ground cover at 30 September each year.

On paddocks where ground cover is less than 50%, land is considered to be in poor condition, and less than 20% is considered degraded condition.

It is recognised that:

- For some land types it may not be possible to achieve 50% ground cover at 30 September each year even when taking all reasonable steps.
- It may be impractical and cost prohibitive to improve some areas of very degraded land, e.g. severe gullying or scalded areas. If so, measures must be taken to prevent these areas from further degrading or expanding.

Under the new Reef regulations, there are four standard conditions for graziers:

Standard condition 1
For land in good or fair condition, continue using measures to maintain the land in good or fair condition.

Standard condition 2
For land in poor condition, measures must be implemented to improve land condition towards achieving good or fair condition.

Standard condition 3
For land in degraded condition, measures must be implemented to improve land condition towards achieving good or fair condition OR prevent areas of degraded land condition from further degrading or expanding.

Standard condition 4
General and minimum standard records must be made within three business days, kept for at least six years and be made available upon request.

For a full description of the minimum practice agricultural standard requirements for graziers, please refer to the Agricultural ERA standard for beef cattle grazing. You can also refer to the Grazing guide for information on how to comply. These documents are available online at www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations
What about other requirements for records about agricultural chemicals?

You might also be required to keep records because of other legal requirements.

For example, the Chemical Usage (Agricultural and Veterinary) Control Act 1988 requires graziers in the Wet Tropics, Burdekin and Mackay Whitsunday regions to meet prescribed conditions (including record keeping) for using, preparing, storing and possessing ametryn, atrazine, diuron, hexazinone, and tebuthiuron.

For more information on this requirement, please refer to ‘Agricultural chemicals’ on the Business Queensland website at www.business.qld.gov.au

When will the new regulations apply?

Record keeping

From 1 December 2019, all graziers in the Wet Tropics, Burdekin, Mackay Whitsunday, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary regions will need to keep general records and then, as the minimum practice agricultural standards commence for their region, minimum standard records.

Minimum practice agricultural standards

The minimum practice agricultural standards for graziers will apply as follows:

- Burdekin region from 1 December 2020
- Fitzroy region from 1 December 2021
- Wet Tropics region from 1 December 2022
- Mackay Whitsunday region from 1 December 2022
- Burnett Mary region from 1 December 2022.

Are best management practice accredited producers compliant with the new regulations?

The new regulations provide the opportunity for third party programs such as industry best management practice (BMP) programs or like programs to become recognised accreditation programs. Programs can be recognised if they accredit farming practices that are consistent with, or better than, the minimum practice agricultural standards under the regulations.

Producers who are accredited under a recognised program and continue to meet the terms of accreditation will be deemed to have met the minimum practice agricultural standards for the duration of their accreditation.

Producers accredited against a recognised program will not be the focus of compliance activities.

Producers who are involved in an existing best management practice program should confirm with the program owner that the program has or will be recognised under the new Reef protection regulations.

Despite the absence of the Grazing BMP, the Queensland Government will acknowledge graziers that achieved accreditation under the former Grazing BMP. These graziers will be considered as a low compliance risk for five years from 1 December 2019.

In addition, the Queensland Government will acknowledge graziers participating in the Grazing Resilience and Sustainable Solutions (GRASS) Program as a low priority for compliance visits for the duration of their involvement in this program.

How will compliance work?

Compliance officers from the Department of Environment and Science will meet with producers to help them understand what is required under the minimum practice agricultural standards.

The compliance program is prioritising its efforts on the areas that represent the greatest water quality threat to the Reef.

While the officers aim to work with producers to meet the requirements, the department will respond to ongoing non-compliance in accordance with its Enforcement Guidelines.

For more information, please refer to the Department of Environment and Science Compliance and enforcement information at www.environment.des.qld.gov.au/management/compliance-enforcement

Where can I find more detailed information?

You can register at www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations to receive an information pack as well as regular updates on the regulations.
What support is available for graziers?

Programs and support tools are provided by the Australian and Queensland governments and industry organisations to help graziers identify opportunities to improve farming practices.

The Grazing Resilience and Sustainable Solutions (GRASS) Program supports graziers to improve poor and degraded land through one-on-one extension support and tailored Land Management Plans in the Burdekin, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary regions.

The program also includes financial incentives for infrastructure improvements. For more information on the GRASS Program please call the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries on 13 25 23, regional NRMs or visit the Support programs and tools for graziers page, available at www.qld.gov.au

Eligible graziers will also be able to access a one-off rebate of up to $1000 to help offset the costs of obtaining professional and agronomic advice from an Accredited Agricultural Adviser to meet the minimum practice agricultural standards through the Farming in Reef Catchments Rebate Scheme.

Information on how to find an Accredited Agricultural Adviser and how to apply for a rebate can be found at www.qrida.qld.gov.au/current-programs/farming-in-reef-catchments-scheme or freecall 1800 623 946.

For more information, please refer to the Support programs and assistance for agricultural producers factsheet available online at www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations

Where can I find more information?

Web: www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations
Email: officeoftheqbr@des.qld.gov.au
Telephone: 13 QGOV (13 74 68)

When will the Reef protection regulations apply for beef cattle grazing?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Record keeping requirements</th>
<th>Minimum practice agricultural standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burdekin</td>
<td>1 December 2019</td>
<td>1 December 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitzroy</td>
<td>1 December 2019</td>
<td>1 December 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wet Tropics, Mackay Whitsunday and Burnett Mary</td>
<td>1 December 2019</td>
<td>1 December 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape York</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>