



Department of Planning,
Lands and Heritage



DECEMBER 2023

Pastoral Lands Board Policy

Pastoral Lease Stocking Policy

The Pastoral Lands Board acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of this land. We pay our respect to Elders past and present, their descendants who are with us today, and those who will follow in their footsteps.

Disclaimer

This document has been prepared by the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage on behalf of the Pastoral Lands Board. Any representation, statement, opinion or advice expressed or implied in this publication is made in good faith and on the basis that the Government, its employees and agents are not liable for any damage or loss whatsoever which may occur as a result of action taken or not taken, as the case may be, in respect of any representation, statement, opinion or advice referred to herein. Professional advice should be obtained before applying the information contained in this document to particular circumstances.

© State of Western Australian

Published by the
Pastoral Lands Board
Gordon Stephenson House
140 William Street
Perth WA 6000

Locked Bag 2506
Perth WA 6001

Publication date: 23 January 2024
Operational date: 23 January 2024

website: www.dplh.wa.gov.au
email: info@dplh.wa.gov.au

tel: 08 6551 8002
fax: 08 6551 9001

National Relay Service: 13 36 77

This document is available in
alternative formats on application
to the Communications Branch.

POLICY STATEMENT

The Pastoral Lands Board (PLB) is committed to good land management outcomes on pastoral leases across Western Australia. The PLB holds the view that profitable pastoralism and ecologically sustainable pastoralism are inextricably linked and, as a result, good land management and good economic performance go hand in hand. In particular, the PLB believes that working cooperatively with pastoral lessees, and government, will achieve improved land management outcomes. This policy reflects this view.

The PLB's functions with respect to land management are outlined in section 95 of the *Land Administration Act 1997* (LAA). Those functions include:

- To ensure that pastoral leases are managed on an ecologically sustainable basis; and
- To develop policies to prevent the degradation of rangelands; and
- To develop policies to rehabilitate degraded or eroded rangelands and to restore their pastoral potential; and
- To monitor the numbers and the effect of stock and feral animals on pastoral land.

Stock numbers should reflect the long-term sustainable carrying capacity of the pastoral lease, taking into consideration current rangeland and seasonal conditions and forage available, whilst ensuring that the lease is managed to its best advantage as a pastoral property.

Potential carrying capacity reflects the long-term average of potential stock numbers based on good pasture condition over the whole lease, and the lease having fully accessible waters for stock, and other necessary infrastructure.

If stock numbers are not managed to the PLB's satisfaction, it may, under section 111A of the LAA, determine minimum and maximum numbers and the distribution of stock to be carried from time to time, based on its assessment of the sustainable carrying capacity of the land. The PLB may also require a

lessee to remove a specified number of permitted stock from land under the pastoral lease by a specified date, and require evidence of compliance to this written direction. The PLB must have regard to land condition standards and land management guidelines when exercising these powers.

In managing stock numbers over the term of the lease, pastoral lessees are required to meet all obligations to maintain the lease in accordance with Part 7, Division 4 of the LAA, specifically in relation to:

- Section 108(1) of the LAA to operate the land to its best advantage as a pastoral property to the satisfaction of the PLB;
- Section 108(2) of the LAA requiring lessees to use methods of best pastoral and environmental management practice, appropriate to the area where the land is situated, for the management of permitted stock and for the management, conservation and regeneration of pasture for grazing; and
- Section 108(4) of the LAA to maintain the indigenous pasture and other vegetation on the land to the satisfaction of the PLB.

Lessees must use best pastoral and environmental management methods in managing their pastoral leases. Overstocking of the land leads to overgrazing, which is a key contributor to pastoral land degradation.

The PLB recognises destocking as an effective land management tool for ensuring the long-term ecological sustainability of the land and natural resources on a pastoral lease. Destocking can also be a useful tool to provide a feed reserve for drier conditions, preserve the best forage areas for activities such as weaning or joining and / or holding stock for sale prior to transport. Therefore, the PLB allows pastoral lessees to destock the land under the lease for a period of up to five years without a requirement to seek the PLB's permission.

This policy complements the Pastoral Purposes Framework, which provides a guide to activities that can be undertaken on Western Australian pastoral leases.

OBJECTIVE

1. To provide guidance regarding stocking rates in relation to the requirement to manage and work the land under the lease to its best advantage as a pastoral property.
2. To provide guidance regarding stocking rates in relation to the requirement to use methods of best pastoral and environmental management practice.

PRINCIPLES

1. It is the responsibility of the lessee to manage stock numbers in accordance with the lessee's requirements to use methods of best pastoral and environmental management.
2. Lessees are required to use methods of best pastoral and environmental management practice at all times. The PLB considers this essential to ensuring that a pastoral lease is managed and worked to its best advantage as a pastoral property in the long term.
3. The PLB is committed to working collaboratively with lessees and government to achieve agreed long-term good land management outcomes that are practical and sustainable.
4. The PLB acknowledges that exercising its powers to determine minimum and maximum stock numbers, and to remove a specified number of permitted stock from land under the pastoral lease, can have significant financial impacts on lessees. Consequently, the PLB's preferred approach is to exercise these powers as a last resort, where no other alternatives are feasible, and for the minimum practical duration.
5. The PLB must have regard to land condition standards and land management guidelines when determining maximum and minimum numbers and the distribution of permitted stock on a pastoral lease.
6. The PLB will determine whether the lease is being managed to its best advantage as a pastoral property and according to best pastoral and environmental practice, utilising, in part, the stock numbers on a lease as a percentage of the Potential Carrying Capacity (PCC) of the lease.

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

1. The PLB will apply the following criteria to assess which of three Stocking Tiers a lease falls into:

STOCKING TIER	CONSIDERATIONS	RESPONSE
Tier A: Destocked		
<p>Sub-Tier A1: Completely Destocked</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No stock over five consecutive years. <p>Sub-Tier A2: Effectively Destocked</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stock numbers less than 10% of PCC on average over five consecutive years. 	<p>The PLB considers that a lease in Stocking Tier A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is at high risk of not being managed and worked to its best advantage as a pastoral property; and Is at low risk of future environmental degradation from livestock grazing pressure. 	<p>The PLB response to leases in Stocking Tier A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will require lessees to provide substantial evidence that a lease is, and will continue to be, managed and worked to its best advantage as a pastoral property; and Will apply a risk-based land condition monitoring regime to assess rangeland condition.
Tier B: Marginally Stocked		
<p>Sub-Tier B1: Minimally Stocked</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stock numbers (a) less than 20% of PCC on average, and (b) less than 20% of PCC on average over five consecutive years. <p>Sub-Tier B2: Very Conservatively Stocked</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stock numbers (a) less than 30% of PCC on average, and (b) less than 30% of PCC on average over five consecutive years. 	<p>The PLB considers that a lease in Stocking Tier B:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is at risk of not being managed and worked to its best advantage as a pastoral property; and, Is at low risk of future environmental degradation from livestock grazing pressure. 	<p>The PLB response to leases in Stocking Tier B:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> May require lessees to provide evidence that a lease is, and will continue to be, managed and worked to its best advantage as a pastoral property; and Will apply a risk-based land condition monitoring regime to assess rangeland condition.

STOCKING TIER	CONSIDERATIONS	RESPONSE
Tier C: Stocked		
<p>Sub-Tier C1: Conservatively Stocked</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stock numbers fall outside the criteria for Tiers A and B, and/or are between 30% and 100% of PCC on average over five consecutive years. <p>Sub-Tier C2: Fully Stocked</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stock numbers at or above 100% of PCC on average over five consecutive years. 	<p>The PLB considers that a lease in Stocking Tier C:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is at low risk of not being managed and worked to its best advantage as a pastoral property; and May be at risk of future environmental degradation from livestock grazing pressure. 	<p>The PLB response to leases in Stocking Tier C:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not require additional evidence that a lease is managed and worked to its best advantage as a pastoral property; and Will use stocking numbers as one of the risk factors informing the application of its land condition monitoring regime.

2. The PLB will take a proactive, collaborative approach to engaging with lessees where concerns have been identified. The PLB's response will be determined on a case by case basis in accordance with its [Rangelands Management Compliance Policy](#).
3. In ascertaining whether a lease is managed and worked to its best advantage as a pastoral property, the PLB will include in its consideration:
 - a) Land condition:
 - i. Any land condition standards issued by the PLB under s100A of the LAA that set out benchmarks and objectives in relation to the condition of land held under pastoral leases;
 - ii. The nature of the land systems, including their productive capacity;
 - iii. Current condition of the rangelands and amount of palatable forage available;
 - iv. Extent of land degradation e.g. areas that are severely degraded or have little to no pastoral potential, including historical or long-term degradation that may require a longer recovery period.
 - b) The lessee's long-term land management plan to operate the land to its best pastoral advantage.
 - c) Seasonal/climate conditions, such as drought and the last rain event or season.
 - d) Good land management:
 - i. Any land management guidelines issued by the PLB under s100A of the LAA that provide guidance on best practice for the management of land held under pastoral leases;
 - ii. Grazing distribution and how any remaining stock will be managed or kept out of degraded areas;
 - iii. Land regeneration and rehabilitation activities underway or being planned;
 - iv. Control of declared animals and plants e.g. management of feral animals and weeds;
 - v. Fire management.

- e) Infrastructure and maintenance, including the ability of existing infrastructure to support stock, and manage stock movements and grazing pressure across the lease, particularly water infrastructure.
 - f) Type of pastoral enterprise or ownership interests.
 - g) Whether the lessee's proposed management plan is financially feasible, including potential for:
 - i. Generating income from pastoral sources, such as agistment or subleasing;
 - ii. Generating income from non-pastoral sources such as permits issued under Part 7, Division 5 of the LAA; or
 - iii. Creating efficiencies by amalgamating operations with other pastoral businesses.
4. The PLB believes that management and maintenance of infrastructure is critical in effectively managing stock movements, particularly when supporting more than minimum stock numbers. This also has other benefits such as avoiding potential animal welfare issues, for example, when there is limited infrastructure and water.
5. The PLB will assess stock numbers on an annual basis and will request lessees who may be at risk of not complying with this policy to provide evidence that the lease is, and will continue to be, managed and worked to its best advantage as a pastoral property in accordance with this policy.

QUESTIONS AND FURTHER INFORMATION ON PASTORAL LEASE STOCKING

Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage

Lease Management and Compliance Team

08 6552 4574 or LeaseManagement@dplh.wa.gov.au