Droving livestock – animal welfare and other considerations

Droving, or taking livestock on the road, is a common management practice for Queensland’s cattle and sheep industries. It is important that stock owners and drovers are aware of animal welfare and other legal requirements when moving livestock on stock routes and roads. This guide outlines factors to be considered when planning a journey and assessing livestock suitability for droving.

Permits

Under the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002, owners of stock that will be travelling for more than a day or grazing on the stock route must have a permit issued by the local government for that area.

The relevant local government can only issue a permit if the stock and stock route conditions are suitable for the animals to move at least 10 kilometres each day and continue to travel at that rate for the entire journey. A local government can refuse to issue a permit if these requirements are not met.

Animal welfare considerations

The Queensland Animal Care and Protection Act 2001 (ACPA) places a duty of care responsibility on the person in charge of an animal to provide for its needs (i.e. food and water) in an appropriate manner.

When livestock are on the road, the owner and drover share this duty of care.

The following are guidelines to help determine the animal’s fitness for the minimum daily travel for the entire journey:

- **Age** - very young animals are generally not suited to be on the road as they are unable to cope with the minimum daily travel. Animals less than 1 month of age travelling with their mothers and animals less than 5 months of age travelling without their mothers should not be on the road.
- **Body condition** - animals with a condition score of less than 2 on a 5 point scale (1 being emaciated and 5 being obese) are generally not fit for the road as they lack the strength to maintain minimum daily travel for an extended period of time.
- **Health** - only fit and healthy animals should be taken on the road.
- **Reproductive status** - animals that are known to be, or are visually assessed to be heavily pregnant, or, for longer journeys, likely to give birth during the journey, should not be taken on the road.

Stock route considerations

It is important to ensure the conditions on the stock route suit the class of livestock intended to be moved. If conditions are unsuitable the animals may suffer or die.

Pasture and water

Adequate pasture and availability of quality water on the stock route are key considerations to ensure the welfare of the animals.

**Pasture** - if livestock are less than condition score 2, but are considered suitable to maintain travel, available pasture should be sufficient to increase body condition and strength. If the animals are in condition score 2 or above, pasture should as a minimum, be sufficient to maintain body condition and strength.
Water - it is the responsibility of the person in charge to ensure there is sufficient water of adequate quality on the stock route to meet the daily needs of the animals. The following should be taken into consideration:

- Safe access to water - natural water courses and some dams present a risk of animals becoming bogged. If there is a risk of animals bogging, an alternative access to water, such as carting water or pumping to troughs, should be provided.
- Distance between water points - if the distance between watering points is too great and the animals cannot regularly access suitable water, they may lose body condition and weaken or die. Prevailing weather conditions, such as extreme heat, as well as age and lactation status, influence the acceptable distance between water points.
- Water quality – in addition to adequate quantity, water must also be of a quality sufficient to meet the needs of the animal. Stagnant or very muddy waterholes and dams will generally not meet the needs of the animal.

Presence of toxic plants
Some plants have the potential to severely impact on the health and welfare of livestock. Animals that are hungry and/or unfamiliar with a plant type are particularly susceptible.

Drovers should be aware of local toxic plants to minimise stock access; and treat any animal that demonstrates signs of poisoning.

Other considerations

Disease movement restrictions
A Travel Permit issued under the Stock Act 1915 may be required if certain disease conditions apply to movement of stock on sections of the stock route intended to be used. Before stock are driven along stock routes or roads, check with the local Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) office for any disease restrictions that are applicable to the area.

Cattle tick movement restriction
Queensland is divided into three cattle tick declared zones: free, control and infected. The zones aim to prevent the spread of cattle ticks. Stock movements from the infected zone or from cattle tick infected properties in either of the other zones are subject to movement conditions.

Before stock are driven along stock routes or roads, check with the local DAFF office for any cattle tick movement controls that apply to the area.

National Livestock Identification Scheme (NLIS)
Cattle droving on stock routes must be identified with an approved NLIS device (tag or bolus). The NLIS database must be updated within 48 hours of the commencement of the journey.

Whenever stock travel across Council boundaries or the movement is completed, information must be updated on the NLIS database within 48 hours.

Further information
For further information about travel permits on stock routes, contact the relevant local government office, Stock Routes Management on 07 3199 7865 or visit the Department of Natural Resources and Mines website www.nrm.qld.gov.au

For information on animal welfare, health, NLIS or stock movements, or condition scoring please contact DAFF on 13 25 23 or visit www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au