The Department of Primary Industries
and Regional Development

NSW Cattle Tick Strategic Plan

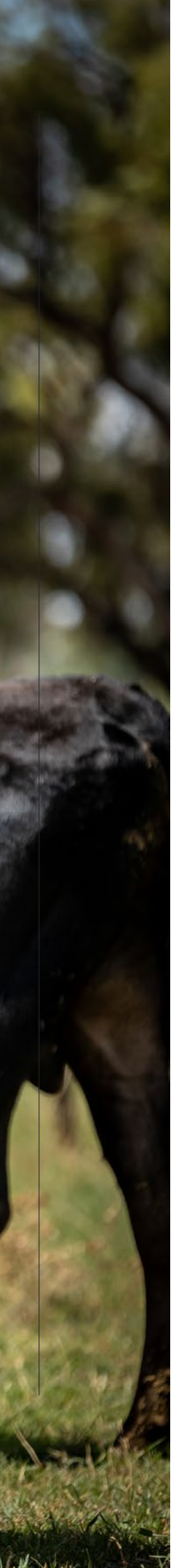
The future management strategy for cattle tick in NSW

October 2026

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Executive summary

Cattle tick (*Rhipicephalus australis*) is one of Australia's most significant livestock pests, causing production losses, animal welfare impacts, and tick fever transmission. National losses are estimated at approximately $160 million annually, while unchecked establishment in eastern NSW could cost the NSW cattle industry up to $30–32 million annually.

While the **NSW Cattle Tick Program (the Program)** has restricted known cattle tick infested properties to the Northern Rivers region through surveillance, movement controls, and treatment schemes, cattle tick remains a challenge for NSW.

Moving forward with the Program requires improved communication and stakeholder engagement, which includes the provision of enhanced advice and support to affected producers and a coordinated approach that promotes biosecurity as a shared responsibility across government, industry, and community.

This document – the **NSW Cattle Tick Strategic Plan (the Plan)** – sets out the future management strategy for cattle tick in NSW, using a risk-based geographic approach and a phased implementation model.

During the life of this Plan, the regulatory approach of the Program will be updated to align with the NSW Government's renewed 2026 commitment to eradicating cattle tick from NSW – defined as reducing infestations to 100–200 properties in the Northern Rivers region. The revised Program will take effect on 1 October 2027.



This Plan defines three goals that will underpin the Program over the next six years:

1

Reduce the number of cattle tick infested properties in the Northern Rivers region of NSW.

2

Decrease the size of the area in the Northern Rivers region of NSW that contains cattle tick infested properties.

3

Ensure that cattle tick remains confined to the Northern Rivers region of NSW.

Introduction

Background

Cattle tick (*Rhipicephalus australis*) is a significant external parasite of cattle in Australia. It damages hides, reduces milk production and weight gain, and transmits the blood parasites that cause tick fever.

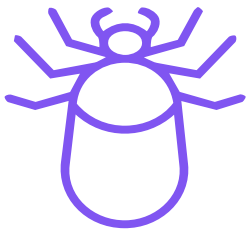
Cattle tick is endemic in eastern and northern QLD, as well as in pastoral areas of WA and the NT.

Detecting and eradicating cattle tick requires cooperation with farmers and between government agencies – NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) and Local Land Services (LLS), and other stakeholders.

Cattle tick is notifiable under the Biosecurity Act 2015 (the Act) and is listed in Schedule 1 of the Biosecurity Regulation 2017 as a notifiable pest in NSW.

Status report on cattle tick in NSW

The number of cattle tick infested properties in NSW has increased during 2026 with infested properties confined to the seven Local Government Areas in the Northern Rivers region. As of 9 September 2026, there are a total of 887 cattle tick infested properties in NSW. The number of cattle tick infested properties detected in 2025 exceeded the number detected in any single year from 2009 to 2024 and the number of cattle tick infested properties detected in 2026 is on track to equal or exceed the number detected in 2025.



887

cattle tick infested properties in NSW.

Planning for the future

The **NSW Cattle Tick Program (the Program)** currently undertakes surveillance to find infested properties within NSW. It enforces interstate movement controls and issues movement controls to infested properties to contain infestations. It administers treatment schemes to remove cattle tick from infested properties. It also treats cattle at saleyards in the Northern Rivers region to reduce the risk of cattle tick spread within the Northern Rivers region and to other parts of NSW.

In 2025, the Minister for Agriculture asked the NSW Independent Biosecurity Commissioner (IBC) to provide advice on the Program. In preparing this advice, the IBC considered the status of cattle tick in NSW; the feasibility of eradication; alignment with biosecurity legislation; comparable programs; previous evaluations and reviews; program risks, benefits, and beneficiaries; and any transitional arrangements needed for future program options.

In response to the report from the IBC on the Program, NSW DPIRD convened a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) workshop to support development of a strategic plan for future cattle tick management in NSW.

The TAG recognised that, although cattle tick is currently confined to the Northern Rivers region of NSW, local conditions and the presence of cattle tick in neighbouring QLD limit the prospects for statewide eradication (extinction). Key regional factors include diverse land use and topography, frequent changes in property ownership, increasing subdivision, smaller property sizes, and higher cattle densities in some areas.

Based on the recommendations in the IBC report and the findings of the TAG, NSW DPIRD is implementing the **NSW Cattle Tick Strategic Plan (the Plan)**, which sets out the future strategy for long-term cattle tick eradication in NSW, using a risk-based geographic approach and a phased implementation model. During the life of this Plan, **the Program** will be updated to align with the NSW Government's renewed 2026 commitment to eradicating cattle tick from NSW – defined as reducing infestations to 100–200 properties in the Northern Rivers region. The revised program arrangements will take effect by **1 October 2027,** with the twelve months from 1 October 2026 a year of transition focused on surveillance, legislative changes, and reforms to the treatment schemes.

The NSW Cattle Tick Strategic Plan

Shared responsibility underpins the future approach and is essential to successful progress toward eradication.

This Plan provides an overview of the future strategies that will be implemented through a transitional (phased) approach, which will take place over a twelve-month period, beginning with the **implementation of the Plan on 1 October 2026**. Further detail and information on the specific methods that will be adopted during the life of this Plan and incorporated into the future Program will be provided in the subordinate plans (the communications and engagement plan, the surveillance plan, and the operational plan) and treatment schemes.

The Plan defines three goals that will underpin the Program over the next six years:

1. Reduce the number of cattle tick infested properties in the Northern Rivers region of NSW.

2. Decrease the size of the area in the Northern Rivers region of NSW that contains cattle tick infested properties.

3. Ensure that cattle tick remains confined to the Northern Rivers region of NSW.

During the first 12 months of the six-year Plan, several priority actions will be taken to support the **transition to a new Program by 1 October 2027:**

- Review, update and implement the Cattle Tick Communications and Engagement Plan.
- Develop and implement a Cattle Tick Surveillance Plan.
- Define the boundaries of the high-, medium-and low-risk areas.
- Review and revise government-and owner-led treatment schemes.
- Develop and implement a Cattle Tick Operational Plan.
- Review and revise incentives to report and implement effective treatment schemes.
- Review and revise the approach to cattle tick carrier movement controls within NSW.
- Review and revise the requirements for cattle tick carriers moving from cattle tick infested properties and zones in QLD, WA, and the NT into NSW.

The revised Program will achieve its goals through a risk-and area-based approach that classifies different areas of NSW as high[1] , medium[2] , or low[3] risk. It is important to note that the boundaries of these areas are dynamic and will be subject to regular review. Over the next six years, the high-risk area is intended to decrease in size, while the medium-risk area is intended to shift, resulting in areas currently classified as medium-risk becoming low-risk and areas currently on the periphery of the high-risk area becoming medium-risk.

1. The high-risk area contains areas in which the property-level prevalence of cattle tick is highest.
2. The medium-risk area contains areas in which the property-level prevalence of cattle tick is between that in the high-risk and low-risk areas.
3. The low-risk area contains areas in which there are currently no known cattle tick infested properties.

Strategic objectives

The strategic objectives of the Plan are:

- **Rapid detection** of infested properties, especially outside of the Northern Rivers region.
- **Significant reduction** in spread from infested properties.
- **Eradication** in the low and medium-risk areas.
- **Containment** in the high and medium-risk areas.
- **Stengthened surveillance** at aggregations of cattle tick carriers (e.g., saleyards, abattoirs, feedlots, shows, and livestock events), adjoining, and traced properties and properties in common.
- **Improved treatment schemes** that incorporate improved chemical stewardship, use of higher efficacy chemicals – including potentially newer classes of chemicals, and resistance monitoring.
- **Enhanced owner engagement** and shared responsibility.
- **Support for evidence-based research and development** that includes **vaccination against cattle tick.**
- **Clear governance and funding.**

Governance

Cattle Tick Consultative Committee

The Cattle Tick Consultative Committee (CTCC) provides a collaborative forum through which industry, community, and government stakeholders can work together to support the eradication of cattle tick in NSW. CTCC members are appointed by the NSW Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) with membership being drawn from a broad stakeholder base across the cattle and allied industries, affected tertiary industries, and the government sector. The NSW CVO may add additional members to the CTCC at their discretion based on the needs of the Program.

Technical Advisory Group

The Technical Advisory Group (TAG) is a standing, expert advisory body convened to provide independent and expert technical advice to inform the design, delivery, and continuous improvement of the Plan and the Program. The TAG consists of eight members, including the chair – the NSW DPIRD Manager Animal Biosecurity Programs (or delegate), and a representative from the LLS Animal Biosecurity and Welfare function.

Legislative basis

NSW Biosecurity Act 2015

- Provides for the application of regulatory controls.
- Includes legally enforceable instruments such as control orders and biosecurity directions.

Activities under the new Cattle Tick Strategic Plan

Tracing and surveillance

DPIRD and LLS staff will deliver awareness and education programs to enhance detection and reporting of cattle tick by cattle tick carrier owners/managers.

Tracing

Cattle tick carrier movements will be traced using the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS), Record of Movements (ROMs) submitted via the Cattle Tick App, and interviews with cattle tick infested property owners. Cameras will continue to monitor the border between Qld and NSW, and suspected non-compliant movements of cattle tick carriers will be investigated.

Property-level surveillance

Property-level surveillance will be owner led with support from government in **high-risk areas**. All detections of cattle tick by cattle tick carrier owners/managers will be reported to the Program via the NSW Cattle Tick App, the Biosecurity Helpline on 1800 680 244, or LLS.

Property-level surveillance will be DPIRD led in **medium-risk areas.**

Property-level surveillance will be DPIRD and LLS led in **low-risk areas.**

There will be greater emphasis on owner-led surveillance in secondary species – predominantly horses.

Adjoining properties

Surveillance on properties that adjoin infested properties in **high-risk areas** will be owner led with support from government.

Surveillance on properties that adjoin infested properties in **medium-risk areas** will be DPIRD and LLS led.

Surveillance on properties that adjoin infested properties in **low-risk areas** will be DPIRD and LLS led.



Trace-forward properties

Surveillance on properties in **high-risk areas** that received cattle tick carrier(s) from an infested property in NSW in the 12 months prior to detection of the infested property will be owner led with support from government.

Surveillance on properties in **medium-risk areas** that received cattle tick carrier(s) from an infested property in NSW in the 12 months prior to detection of the infested property will be DPIRD and LLS led.

Surveillance on properties in **low-risk areas** that received cattle tick carrier(s) from an infested property in NSW in the 12 months prior to detection of the infested property will be DPIRD and LLS led.

Surveillance on properties in high-risk areas that received cattle tick carrier(s) from the infested zones in QLD, WA, and the NT where interstate movement requirements were not met will be DPIRD and LLS or owner led with support from government.

Surveillance on properties in medium-risk areas that received cattle tick carrier(s) from the infested zones in QLD, WA, and the NT where interstate movement requirements were not met will be DPIRD and LLS led.

Surveillance on properties in low-risk areas that received cattle tick carrier(s) from the infested zones in QLD, WA, and the NT where interstate movement requirements were not met will be LLS led with support from DPIRD and LLS.

Trace-backward properties

Surveillance on properties in high-risk areas that supplied cattle tick carrier(s) to an infested property in the 12 months prior to detection of the infested property will be owner led with support from government.

Surveillance on properties in medium-risk areas that supplied cattle tick carrier(s) to an infested property in the 12 months prior to detection of the infested property will be DPIRD and LLS led.

Surveillance on properties in low-risk areas that supplied cattle tick carrier(s) to an infested property in the 12 months prior to detection of the infested property will be owner led with support from government, or DPIRD and LLS led.

Properties in common

Many cattle tick carrier owners/managers in NSW own or manage multiple properties. Properties that are owned or managed by someone who also owns or manages a cattle tick infested property in NSW (i.e. properties in common) will be subject to surveillance.

Surveillance on properties in common in high-risk areas will be owner led with support from government.

Surveillance on properties in common in medium-risk areas will be DPIRD and LLS led.

Surveillance on properties in common in low-risk areas will be DPIRD and LLS led.

Receiving cattle tick risk area	Intrastate forward movement (i.e., within NSW)	Interstate forward movement (i.e., infested zones in QLD, WA, or the NT)
High-risk area	Owner led	Owner or government led
Medium-risk area	DPIRD and LLS	DPIRD and LLS
Low-risk area	DPIRD and LLS led	DPIRD and LLS led

Aggregator surveillance

Saleyard surveillance

Saleyard surveillance in the Northern Rivers region will be DPIRD and LLS led to rapidly detect infested properties that present cattle to the saleyards.

Saleyard surveillance outside of the Northern Rivers region will be DPIRD and LLS led to rapidly detect infested properties that present cattle to the saleyards.

Cattle tick carrier owners/managers with a property in any of the three cattle tick risk areas of NSW will be notified if they present cattle-tick-infested cattle to a saleyard.

Abattoir surveillance

Surveillance at the Casino abattoir will be undertaken by DPIRD and LLS, federal government officers and abattoir staff.

Cattle tick carrier owners/managers with a property in any of the three cattle tick risk areas of NSW will be notified if they present cattle-tick-infested cattle to an abattoir.

Dip site surveillance

Consideration will be given to accreditation of preliminary and clearance dip operators.

Surveillance at events

Surveillance at events likely to be attended by cattle tick carriers from the cattle tick infested zones of QLD, WA and the NT and/or properties under movement restrictions due to the regulation of cattle tick in the cattle tick free zones of QLD, WA and the NT will be DPIRD, LLS, and event organiser/operator led to detect any infested cattle tick carriers at these events and reduce the risk of further spread of cattle tick in NSW.

Movement controls

Interstate

There will be requirements for primary and secondary cattle tick carriers moving from cattle tick infested properties and zones in QLD, WA, and the NT into NSW.

High-risk areas

There will be requirements for cattle tick carriers between all properties – including properties in common – in the high-risk areas. There will also be requirements for cattle tick carriers moving from high-risk areas into medium- or low-risk areas of NSW.

Medium- and low-risk areas

There will be requirements for cattle tick carrier movements from infested properties and properties subject to Program- or LLS-led cattle tick surveillance in medium- and low-risk areas to other properties in NSW.

Treatment schemes and destocking

Treatment schemes in high-risk areas will be owner led with support from government – both advice and financial support. Treatment scheme reimbursements will be structured to incentivise reporting and implementation of effective treatment schemes. Treatment schemes in medium-risk areas will be government or owner led with support from government. Treatment schemes in low-risk areas will be government led.

There will be greater emphasis on owner-led treatment in secondary species – predominantly horses.

In all areas, destocking will be encouraged on properties where treatment schemes cannot practically be undertaken. Any property that undergoes destocking will need to be free of cattle tick carriers for an extended period to ensure that cattle tick in the environment do not survive the destocking period and infest cattle tick carriers introduced after the destocking period.

Communications and engagement

A renewed communications and engagement strategy will include establishing local partnerships in the Northern Rivers region with key stakeholders, including those in the cattle and equine industries, veterinarians, local council members, and small-scale landholders. The strategy will also ensure appropriate information is provided to key beneficiaries of the Program outside of the Northern Rivers region in NSW (i.e., all cattle producers and other cattle tick carrier owners across all NSW).

The renewed strategy will involve publishing accurate information in plain English, and in a timely manner through all available channels, and provide relevant, nationally consistent information to stakeholders about:

- How to detect cattle tick.
- Changes to the NSW Cattle Tick Program, including new initiatives.
- Cattle tick treatment schemes.
- Any proposed changes to the regulatory approach.

An updated NSW DPIRD Cattle Tick Program website that contains relevant information will be promoted. There will be targeted communications to key stakeholders on areas of concern. Regular updates on the performance of the Program will be provided.

Research and development

The Program will partner with industry to encourage evidence-based research that supports eradication of cattle tick in NSW with emphasis on vaccination against cattle tick.

Funding commitment

The NSW government increased funding for the Program to rebuild capability through stronger stakeholder engagement and expanded farmer support, including enhanced surveillance, compliance, and technical services.





The NSW Cattle Tick Program (2027-2032)

Aim

To eradicate cattle tick from NSW by reducing the number of infested properties with a target of fewer than 200 infested properties by June 2032.



Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and Measures

Goals

1. Reduce the number of cattle tick infested properties in the Northern Rivers region of NSW.
2. Decrease the size of the area in the Northern Rivers region of NSW that contains cattle tick infested properties.
3. Ensure that cattle tick remains confined to the Northern Rivers region of NSW.

Objectives

1. Effective surveillance to find infested properties.
2. Movement controls to prevent the spread of cattle tick from infested properties within NSW and infested properties and zones in QLD, WA, and the NT to properties in NSW.
3. Treatment schemes to remove cattle tick from infested properties and areas.

Strategies

1. A risk-based geographic approach that divides NSW into high-, medium-, and low-risk areas.
2. Containment and eradication in high- and medium-risk areas.
3. Eradication in low-risk areas as required.

Measures

1. Number of infested properties increases with implementation of effective surveillance and then reduces over time as treatment schemes are completed.
2. The size of high- and medium-risk areas, which include infested properties in the Northern Rivers region of NSW, reduces over time as treatment schemes are completed.
3. Ongoing review by the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and the interim review in September 2029 show progress towards eradication.
4. All infested properties are subject to effective treatment schemes.

Eradication options considered during the development of the Plan

In June 2026, the NSW Cattle Tick Program TAG met to support development of the NSW Cattle Tick Strategic Plan (the Plan). During this meeting the TAG considered various characteristics of the Northern Rivers region, including diverse land use and topography, high turnover of land ownership, increasing subdivision leading to smaller property sizes, and high density of cattle in some areas, and aspects of cattle tick spread and control. It worked through four potential options and recommended Option 1, reduction in the impact and spread of cattle tick in NSW through a risk-and area-based phased approach, as the basis of the Plan, which has been adopted by the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) and Local Land Services (LLS).

Option 1:
Reduction in the impact and spread of cattle tick in NSW through a risk- and area-based phased approach (preferred approach)

A 12-month transition period will begin 1 October 2026 with adoption of the Plan. During the transition period the Program will shift from its current form to new program arrangements by 1 October 2027.

This phased approach will give both government and cattle tick carrier owners/managers the opportunity to adjust to the new requirements and work through any issues, enable progress toward the overall aim and goals defined in the Plan, and support domestic and international trade through an improved approach to cattle tick in NSW.



Option 2:
Extinction of cattle tick from NSW

Under this option, NSW would pursue statewide eradication (extinction) of cattle tick from NSW in the short term, with targeted improvements to the current program including strengthened surveillance and tracing, compliance, interstate movement controls, owner support, and performance monitoring. This option would continue to operate under the current regulatory framework, and treatment schemes would be government led.

This option was not recommended by the TAG as it fails to account for the conclusion reached by the NSW Independent Biosecurity Commissioner (IBC) and the TAG that achieving zero infested properties is not realistic given the ongoing high risk of cattle tick introduction from the infested zones in QLD, WA, and the NT. It is also not realistic given the current number of infested properties in the Northern Rivers region and the funding available.

Option 3:
Deregulation of cattle tick in NSW

Under deregulation, cattle tick would no longer be specifically regulated in NSW, with no government oversight or intervention beyond notifiable disease reporting requirements and DPIRD support to meet interstate or international trade requirements. There would be no movement controls to control spread, government-led surveillance, or mandatory treatment schemes within NSW, and it is assumed there would be no formal industry-led or voluntary assurance schemes in place.

This option was not recommended by the TAG as it would lead to a deterioration in animal health and welfare, widespread geographic expansion of cattle tick, substantial economic costs to producers, and increased biosecurity risks and trade implications in NSW. Further, it does not align with the NSW biosecurity strategic outcome of protecting NSW from the risks and impacts of cattle tick and was not recommended by the IBC.

Option 4:
Maintenance of the Program with no substantive changes

Under this option, DPIRD would manage cattle tick in line with the current approach. The report by the IBC identified several deficiencies in the current cattle tick program, with supporting evidence provided through public consultation during development of the report.

While the presence of cattle tick is currently confined to a small portion of NSW – the Northern Rivers region – the number of infested properties is increasing, which places significant pressure on the resourcing available to contain and respond to detections of infested properties. This increased number of infested properties also increases the potential for spread to elsewhere in NSW. Much of coastal and parts of inland NSW are at risk of the establishment of cattle tick.

This option was not recommended by the TAG as it fails to incorporate the findings documented in the report from the IBC into the Program. It also would lead to an increase in the number of cattle tick infested properties, an increased risk of geographic expansion of cattle tick, an increased requirement for treatment scheme funding, and increasing pressure on stretched government resources in NSW.

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Sept/26 914 Cattle tick strategic plan

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