

# Farmers Farm... And Cows DO Moo!

Information for prospective & current rural landholders



Natural Resources Advisory Council  
New South Wales

## The Byron Shire Hinterland *A mayoral message...*

*The Byron Shire hinterland is becoming increasingly popular for new residents, as it offers a landscape and quality of life that many people find hard to resist. So it's no wonder there are many new arrivals to our shire. Whilst such a move can offer a wonderful change of lifestyle, it's important for a realistic understanding of rural life before buying a property.*



*Although it may look peaceful (and usually is), many people earn their livelihood in rural areas and carry out legitimate activities that may surprise those who haven't lived in rural areas previously.*

*This brochure, an initiative of Council's Sustainable Agriculture Strategy summarises some important aspects of rural life that are worth considering prior to purchasing land. It is also a useful guide for all landholders on being a better neighbour.*

*I hope you find it helpful and enjoy the beautiful Byron Shire rural hinterland.*

*Jan Barham*

*Byron Shire Mayor Cr Jan Barham*

## Realistic Expectations

## about moving to a rural area.



It is important to have realistic expectations of life in a rural area and do your research about the use of land surrounding your intended property.

- Much of the rural zone is, in effect, an industrial zone, where the industry is agriculture. Many agricultural landuses impact on neighbouring properties and can affect residential amenity.

- Odours, noise, dust and smoke are common outputs of legitimate agricultural activities. Many of these activities do not require council approval, however current best practice should be followed to minimise environmental and neighbour impacts.
- Understand that farming activities, and scenery, can change over time for example, pastoral scenes that exist today may change in the future to crops or orchards.
- Be prepared for your responsibilities as a rural landholder and the time, energy and money required (see section on Responsibilities of rural landowners)
- If you are considering commuting to towns and villages for work, remember, sharing the road in rural areas takes on a whole new meaning. Unsealed roads near your home can also be dusty or muddy depending on the weather.
- Rural land does not necessarily have all the services connected that you might expect - check whether the services you require can be accessed or constructed and the expenses involved.

## What you can do



*'Leaving your land to 'look after itself' results in significant weed problems in Byron Shire'*

- Investigate landuses surrounding the property (eg cattle grazing, macadamia, fruit trees) and their associated farming practices and how they might affect you (for example, harvesting, chemical use). (See section on Agricultural industries and their impacts)
- Consider planting wind breaks and vegetative buffers which can reduce noise, dust, visual impacts, and sometimes odours but be realistic about what you can achieve and don't necessarily rely on action from your neighbours.
- Be prepared to spend time and money on your land management responsibilities, especially weed and pest control. (see section on Responsibilities of rural landowners)
- Buy your land knowing that you can build a house on it - check it has a dwelling entitlement.
- Know what you want to do with the land
- Consider sealing dirt roads in accordance with Council's policy on 'contribution of the cost of sealing roads adjacent to properties at request of owners'
- Check the location of water, gas and electricity services and their proximity to your preferred choice of building site.

# Agricultural industries and their impacts

An active and diverse agricultural sector is a significant economic activity in Byron Shire. While rural landscapes are often peaceful they are the place where many people earn their living. As part of running a commercial farming enterprise there are a range of activities which you should be aware of. Rural areas are also different because the sources of the impacts are often easier to notice compared to an urban environment, where impacts more easily blend in or are readily dispersed.

The common impacts of legitimate agricultural activities in the Byron Shire are illustrated here, with suggestions as to how you might address them.

## What you can do:

- Take the time to become familiar with the area you intend to buy in and the likely impacts of any surrounding activities.
- Take whatever measures you can on your own property to minimise impacts, such as planting wind breaks and buffers to reduce noise, dust, visual impacts, and winds.
- Communicate with your neighbour, ask when activities are likely to occur and encourage a cooperative approach or plan activities around them.

- Plan to be away from home if/when any significant impacts occur.
- Be aware that vistas might change over time.
- If you are buying land for its 'rural-ness' refer to Council's Rural Settlement Strategy which identifies areas for future settlement.
- If you are sensitive to chemicals ask about neighbouring chemical uses.
- Be a good neighbour by using chemicals and spreading fertilisers on still days.
- Be the sort of neighbour you would want to live next to.



*Orchard spraying*

**NOTE:** Local councils will generally not support any action to interfere with the legitimate agricultural use of rural land, where such activities are carried out in accordance with industry standards, relevant regulations and approvals. Some of the activities above will have required formal consent of Council and/or Government agencies.



Traffic on roads -  
Noise, dust, odour

Controlled  
burning -  
Smoke, odour

Construction of quarries,  
dams etc - Visual, noise, dust

Sugar cane harvesting -  
Smoke, odour

Livestock  
movements -  
Dust

Controlled burning  
Smoke, odour

Livestock  
movements -  
Dust

Processing  
Industries such  
as abattoirs or  
dairies - Odour

Ploughing/Cultivating -  
Dust, Visual

The above illustration depicts the impact of the day to day operations of rural living on its residents.

# Responsibilities of rural land owners

Regardless of whether you are conducting a farming business or just wanting a rural lifestyle, you have certain responsibilities as a rural landholder and a duty of care to look after the land you purchase. The information below summarises some of these responsibilities.

## Bushfire management

It is a landowner's duty to prevent the occurrence, and minimise the spread, of bushfires within their property. The main responsibility is to reduce the bushfire risk on their property by reducing the amount of fuel, through the creation of fire breaks. Fire breaks can be created via many methods including manual fuel removal, slashing and burning. There are several elements that increase the bushfire risk to a property, and it pays to assess these risks well in advance. See link below.



### More Information:

- Assessing risk on your Property - NSW Rural Fire Service Website. [www.bushfire.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bushfire.nsw.gov.au)
- Contact the NSW Rural Fire Service Far North Coast Team: (02) 6684 3662

# Weed control

Due to the area's high rainfall and fertile soils Byron Shire has the highest diversity of weeds in NSW, so weed control is a major activity of any rural landholder. All occupiers of rural land have a legal responsibility to control noxious weeds on their property. Environmental weeds should also be controlled. Be sure to inspect the entire property for the level of weed infestation, and consider the amount of work required to control weeds. Also consider the amount of grass that needs to be mown.

If creating gardens and landscaping use local native species in preference to exotics as gardens are one of the greatest sources of environmental weeds. Garden waste should also not be dumped in reserves or bushland to prevent weeds spreading.



*'Weed control is a major responsibility of any rural land holder'*

## **More Information:**

- 'Weeds are invading Byron Shire' brochure Byron Shire Council website [www.byron.nsw.gov.au](http://www.byron.nsw.gov.au)
- 'Resolving conflict in weed control' brochure NSW Department of Primary Industries <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au>
- Contact the Far North Coast Weeds (Noxious weeds): (02) 6623 3833
- Contact Byron Council's Biodiversity Extension Officer: (02) 6626 7126

## Pest animal control

All landholders have an obligation to control pest animals on land they own, occupy or manage. Current species declared as a pest in NSW include wild rabbits, feral pigs, wild dogs and a number of locust species. Rural Lands Protection Boards (RLPBs) help landholders by providing advice and assistance in controlling declared pest species. It is a requirement that Boards levy annual rates on landholders to meet the cost of Board activities. If your property is 4 Ha or larger you will need to pay RLPB rates.

Landowners should also be aware of other pest species in Byron Shire such as cane toads and Indian Myna birds.

### More information:

- Contact the Tweed- Lismore RLPB on 6621 2317 or check the RLPB website [www.rlpb.org.au/index.html](http://www.rlpb.org.au/index.html)
- Contact Byron Shire's Cane Toad Control Officer on 6626 7000

## Domestic animal and livestock control

Allowing your dog to roam and attack livestock is an offence under the Companion Animals Act 1998 and disrespectful to farmers who have to deal with killed or maimed animals. Any dog owner who allows it to attack livestock is liable for the cost of veterinary treatment. A farmer can also detain or destroy a dog if they believe the dog may injure or kill livestock. Ensure you can contain any domestic animals on your property and secure them at night to prevent attacks on livestock and wildlife. For tips on how to be a responsible dog and cat owner in rural areas see the brochures below.

Livestock also should not be allowed to stray onto roads and other people's properties.

### More information :

- Dogs in Rural Communities Brochure - NSW Dept of Local Government [www.dlg.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dlg.nsw.gov.au)
- 10 essential tips for cat owners - Byron Shire Council website [www.byron.nsw.gov.au](http://www.byron.nsw.gov.au)

# Vegetation and biodiversity management

Byron Shire is an area of exceptionally high biodiversity, with a high number of threatened plant and animal species. Because of the overall richness and significance of its plants and animals, all Byron Shire residents have a responsibility to conserve its biodiversity. Rural landholders in particular have a strong role to play in managing vegetation and need to consider the ecological impacts of any activity prior to beginning.

Byron Shire has strict guidelines on tree preservation and there are various forms of legislation that restrict the removal of native vegetation (Council's Tree Preservation Order, the Threatened Species Conservation Act and the Native Vegetation Act). Landholders should therefore check with Council if an approval is required before undertaking any tree removal or lopping.

## More Information:

- Byron Council's Biodiversity Extension Officer: 6626 7126
- Byron Shire Council's Tree Preservation Officer: 66 26 7000
- Byron's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy - Byron Shire Council website, [www.byron.nsw.gov.au](http://www.byron.nsw.gov.au)
- Living with native animals leaflets - Northern Rivers Wildlife Carers: 0500 882 626

# Fencing



It is the responsibility of owners to maintain all dividing fences on their property. If current fencing is in poor condition it can be a considerable cost to replace or repair. The Dividing Fences Act 1991 addresses how the cost of a dividing fence is shared between adjoining land owners. Before erecting a dividing fence an owner must contact the local council to determine whether development consent is first required. Local land boards exist to resolve disputes between neighbours about common boundary fences.

## More Information:

- Problems with fences - LawAccess NSW website, [www.lawaccess.nsw.gov.au](http://www.lawaccess.nsw.gov.au)
- Local Land Board (boundary fencing disputes): (02) 6591 3521

## On-site sewage management systems (OSMS)

Rural properties are generally not connected to the reticulated sewage system and therefore must have a properly functioning on-site sewage management system (commonly referred to as a septic system). New property owners have a legal obligation to obtain the necessary approvals from their local council to operate, upgrade or install a new system. New owners have a responsibility to ensure that the OSMS is operated and maintained in a manner that will prevent any adverse impact on public or environmental health. This includes pumping clean septic tanks every 3-5 years.

### More information:

Contact Byron Council Environmental Health:  
6626 7000

On-site Sewage Management Strategy -  
Byron Shire Council website [www.byron.nsw.gov.au](http://www.byron.nsw.gov.au)



## Waste management and recycling

Council's rural waste and recycling collection service consists of two bins - one for waste, and one for recycling. Most rural properties fall within Council's waste and recycling collection area, however, some roads are excluded for safety reasons. To check if your property is in a collection area, refer to the collection map on Council's website. It is the responsibility of all landholders to ensure waste is managed properly.

### More information:

Waste Service and Recycling Information -  
Byron Shire Council website [www.byron.nsw.gov.au](http://www.byron.nsw.gov.au)

Myocum Waste and Recycling Centre,  
Manse Road, Myocum: 02 6684 1870

### Operating Hours

7.30am to 4.30pm - Monday to Friday

8.00am to 12 noon - Saturday and Sunday

Closed on Public Holidays





## Other Information



**A Resource Kit for Rural Landholders** Nambucca Valley Landcare (02) 6564 7838.

**Rural Landholders Guide to Environmental Law** Environmental Defenders Office (02) 6622 6404

**Rural Life - Is it for You?** Available from Dept of Primary Industries, QLD 13 25 23

**Buying a Small Landholding** Farmnote No.9/2003 WA Dept of Agriculture Website



**Is there other information you'd like to know as a rural landholder?**

Contact Byron Council's Sustainable Agriculture Officer at [council@byron.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@byron.nsw.gov.au) or

Check out the Sustainable Agriculture Homepage at [www.byron.nsw.gov.au](http://www.byron.nsw.gov.au)

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