Beef cattle numbers in the Territory’s Barkly Region have the potential to increase by about 20% by the year 2014, according to Barkly pastoralists.

This is the major finding of the first comprehensive survey of all the Territory’s pastoral regions.

The survey was conducted by the Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines (DPIFM), in collaboration with industry, through the Northern Territory Cattlemen’s Association (NTCA).

The results were released by Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries Kon Vatskalis at the annual meeting of the NTCA in Darwin today.

Mr Vatskalis said there are 28 cattle stations in the Barkly Region - some of them the largest in the world.

“The average station in the Barkly covers 6,745 square kilometres and the largest is 16,116 square kilometres – half the size of Belgium!

“42% of stations in the region have more than 20,000 head of cattle – up from 36 per cent in 1980. The weaning percentage has jumped from 44% to 70%.

“The results of the survey show helicopters, horses and motorbikes, or a combination of all three, are the most common methods of mustering and most stations do this twice a year.

“The vast majority of pastoralists feed their cattle mineral supplements. Exotic weeds, wildfire and native tree and shrub build-up are problems, as they are to a greater or lesser degree in other regions of the Territory.

“Wild dogs are the biggest feral problem, with an estimated average annual loss of calves of $63,000 and the highest estimated loss being $200,000,” he said.

The Territory is divided into four pastoral regions: the Top End, Katherine, Barkly and Alice Springs.

Mr Vatskalis said the survey is a definitive guide to the methods, problems, attitudes, successes and issues faced by pastoralists in the Alice Springs Region.

“It gives the industry an up-to-date picture of management practices so that future directions for research and development can be more relevant.”

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