

Holiday Rental Property Maintenance

For absentee owners of acreage rentals in the Northern Rivers

Why It Matters

When you're not on-site, the lawn is the first thing guests see and the last thing you control. Three things go wrong when grounds maintenance slips:

- **Reviews suffer.** “Looked unkempt on arrival” lands in the first paragraph of a 3-star review and stays there forever.
- **Fire risk compounds.** Long grass on rural land means an APZ breach and an insurance problem during fire season.
- **Liability creeps in.** Tall grass hides snakes, holes, and edges. A guest twisting an ankle in unmown paddock is a claim you don't want.

This guide covers what works for absentee acreage holiday rentals in the Northern Rivers — scheduling, contractor briefs, fire-season specifics, and what autonomous options buy you when you can't be there.

Mowing Schedule for Absentee Owners

The right rhythm depends on the season and your booking pattern. Use this as a default and adjust around bookings.

Season	Recommended frequency	Why
Wet season (Dec–Mar)	Every 7–10 days	Aggressive growth in the Northern Rivers; longer than 10 days and presentation suffers fast
Shoulder (Apr–May, Sep–Nov)	Every 14 days	Steady growth; lines up well with most stay turnovers
Dry/cool (Jun–Aug)	Every 3–4 weeks	Slower growth; spend less, but don't skip — fire breaks still need maintaining

***Booking-aware tip:** schedule a mow 24–48 hours before every booked stay where possible. Same-day mowing risks a bad guest experience (noise, freshly cut grass smell, soggy clippings if it rained). Day-before is the sweet spot.*

Briefing Your Mowing Contractor

Most contractor problems come down to vague briefs. A clear one-pager, sent once, prevents 90% of issues. Specify:

- **Mow zones** — which areas to cut, which to leave (e.g. paddock edges left wild for habitat).
- **Cutting height** — in cm, not “neat” or “short”.
- **Edges** — which to whipper-snipper and which to leave.
- **Pet/wildlife considerations** — tortoises, native habitat, dam edges.
- **Access** — gate codes, where to park, which gates to leave open or closed.
- **Photo requirement** — 2–3 photos before leaving; proves the work was done.
- **Booking calendar share** — so they know when guests arrive.
- **Wet conditions rule** — what to do if ground is too wet to mow: reschedule, not skip.

Red flags: no-shows without notice, “we'll come when we can”, refusing to send before/after photos, price creep without warning, gear that leaves ruts on wet ground.

Fire Season for Absentee Owners

NSW Rural Fire Service requires Asset Protection Zones (APZ) around dwellings on rural land. For holiday rentals, this is non-negotiable — non-compliance can void insurance and triggers a council fine.

- **APZ width:** typically 20 m around the dwelling, but check your council (Byron Shire, Ballina, Lismore, Tweed all have specific rules).
- **Timing:** complete the major pre-season cut by **end of September**.
- **Verification:** ask your mowing contractor for a date-stamped photo of the cleared APZ — keep this in your records for insurance.
- **Bushfire-prone land:** if your property is mapped as bushfire-prone, additional clearance and design rules apply to any new structures.

Tip: put fire-season prep on calendar reminders for early September, not when the season starts. Contractors get booked out fast.

Autonomous Options — What They Buy You

Robot mowers and managed autonomous services are designed for situations like yours: no operator on-site, regular cuts needed, presentation matters. The trade-offs:

- **Consistent presentation** — the lawn gets cut on schedule, regardless of contractor availability.
- **No-show risk removed** — the mower runs whether or not anyone shows up.
- **Reduced contractor coordination** — a managed service handles the mower; you don't.
- **Trade-off:** setup investment — there's an upfront capital cost, and not every property is suited (very steep, very rough, or very small properties may not pay back).

For Northern Rivers acreage holiday rentals (2.5–10 acres, mixed terrain), autonomous setups are increasingly the practical choice — but the right answer depends on slope, fencing, and how guests use the property.

Quick Checklist

- Mowing schedule documented and shared with contractor.
- Day-before-stay mow built into your turnover process.
- Contractor has gate codes, calendar access, and photo brief.
- APZ pre-season cut booked for early September.
- Date-stamped APZ photos saved each year for insurance.
- Wet-conditions rule agreed in writing with contractor.
- Fire-season prep on calendar reminders, not memory.

What's the right setup for your property?

Acreage holiday rentals vary — slope, mix of cleared vs vegetated, guest use of paddocks, dam access. The best maintenance setup depends on which trade-offs matter most for your property and your guests. This guide is a starting point. For a property-specific assessment, get in touch with a local operator who knows Northern Rivers conditions and rental presentation standards.

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