



SPRING 2012

Good winter rains and adequate soil moisture profiles see most farms well placed to produce high quality hay, silage and summer crops. This will be particularly important this spring given the challenges of nil on farm fodder reserves, high grain prices and climate modelling predicting a potential weak El Nino event.

HAY AND SILAGE:

- Conduct a feed budget to assess the quantity and quality of feed to be conserved.
- Select potential hay and silage paddocks now, those with the highest soil fertility and perennial or sown annuals will give the best response to applied nutrient.
- Urea can be applied to responsive paddocks now to ensure adequate area can be shut for hay or silage in spring.
- Lock up times
 - Silage 4 to 5 weeks
 - Hay 6 to 8 weeks
- Longer lock up times will tend to produce lower quality hay without significantly higher yields
- Apply nutrient based on pasture composition, soil test and the results of feed budget
- Most hay paddocks will benefit from an application of fertiliser containing Nitrogen at lock up and a Super Potash blend in the autumn.
- Monitor for pests
- Timing of cut
 - Silage late vegetative
 - Hay 10% flowering of perennials



COST OF EXTRA DRY MATTER:

Based on the current Urea price Nitrogen is valued at \$1.55/kg of N, minimum responses over spring would be expected to be 20-25kg of dry matter per 1 kg of Nitrogen applied, therefore extra dry matter would be produced for \$62-77/tonne given other nutrients are not limiting. If 75% of that extra pasture was harvested as hay the cost would be \$83-100/tonne of dry matter. Compared with potential grain prices approaching \$300/tonne.

SOIL AND TISSUE TESTING

It goes without saying that correcting nutrient deficiencies can be an expensive process but it is critical to ensure productive pastures, animal performance and optimal crop yields. Spring provides the best opportunity to assess your soil's health through soil and tissue testing. Several paddocks should be tested each year as part of an ongoing monitoring program.

- Regularly monitored paddocks
- Paddocks that have failed to perform
- Paddocks to be renovated or cropped in the coming season
- Paddocks that are continually cut for hay or silage



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SUMMER CROPS

- Soil test now to ensure lime can be applied prior to sowing if required
- Spray early to lock in soil moisture
- Good cultivation and rolling is essential, ideally before and after sowing
- Apply a minimum of 250kg/ha of Super or 100kg/ha MAP at sowing to ensure early seedling vigor
- Seeding rates should be 2.5 kg/ha of rape, 0.5-1 kg/ha of turnip depending on bulb size and or 5-10 kg/ha of millet.
- Seed and fertilizer can be topdressed to achieve a quicker and cheaper establishment over conventional sowing.
- 3 weeks after germination apply Urea or Urea/SOA if MAP was used at sowing, applying 30-40 units of N is vital to maximize yield.



Comparison of unrolled and rolled fodder crop

AGROTAIN COATED UREA FOR SUMMER CROPS

When applying Nitrogen to summer crops it is best applied 2 to 3 weeks after germination. Often this period (Oct, Nov, and Dec) coincides with increasing temperatures and less frequent rainfall events and hence more risk of some of the N being lost to the atmosphere through volatilisation. Agrotain coated Urea can reduce these potential losses by slowing and inhibiting the rate of conversion of Urea to ammonium. This slowdown in the N conversion process typically keeps the N in its Urea form for longer (10-14 days instead of 2-3 days). This significantly reduces losses of N as ammonia gas (volatilisation) and can reduce leaching of N as nitrate, thereby leaving more N for plant growth.



Ken Harris inspecting fodder crop established by topdressing seed

Contact the professional team at Vickery Bros.

For healthy soils.

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