



Fertilizer Association of Ireland

Apply fertilizer N P and K now to overcome fodder shortage and the reduce risk fodder shortage next winter.

Improvements in weather conditions in the last week have seen some recovery of grass growth rates. However, it is critical not to take grass growth in the weeks ahead for granted.

Apply fertilizers now in line with requirements to ensure that grass growth potential is maximised to recover grass feed stocks over the next few weeks.

The highest responses to Nitrogen will occur at this time of year.

Late April and May are the months of the year with the highest requirements for N uptake by grass.

Teagasc advice is to have approximately 50% of the total annual N fertilizer usage applied by the end of April. Approximately 65% of the total annual N requirement should be applied by the end of May.

Fertilizer N application is well back on normal so far this year on a lot of farms. It is important to apply N now to have sufficient reserves in the soil to allow grass to grow vigorously to bridge the current feed supply gap.

Response to N in May can be as high as 30 kg of grass DM per kg of N fertilizer applied. This grass will cost approximately 4c per kg. This is a lot cheaper feed than concentrates, and makes fertilizer N good value to boost grass feed stocks.

Fertilizer for silage

High yields of silage will help avoid fodder shortages next winter. Fertilize silage crops now to achieve high yields.

Teagasc advice for first cut silage is to apply 100 units of N, 16 units of P and 100 units of K. Apply additional P and K in fields with low soil fertility (Index 1 and 2). P and K application can be omitted on Index 4 soils where fertility is already high.

Advice for second cut silage is 80 units of N, 8 units of P and 28 units of K.

Use slurry or high P and K compounds for silage to ensure adequate P and K for yield. Slurry applied now will be worth 6 units of N, 5 units of P and over 30 units of K per 1000 gallons. Dilute slurry will have lower P and K contents, so apply at heavier rates if slurry is diluted with water.

Fertilizer for grazing

Apply between 30 and 45 units of N in May for grazing. Apply higher rates if N usage has been below normal so far this year.

P and K requirements for grazing are shown in table 1.

Table 1: Teagasc advice for P and K for grazing on medium fertility soils (Index 3) for dairying and drystock (units/acre).

Stocking rate (whole farm)	Drystock		Dairy	
	P	K	P	K
1.0 LU/ha	3	16	5	4
1.5 LU/ha	5	20	8	8
2.0 LU/ha	8	24	11	12
2.5 LU/ha	10	28	15	16
3.0 LU/ha	12	32	18	20

Higher rates are required for low fertility (Index 1 and 2 soils). P or K can be omitted on Index 4 soils. Reduce P and K where slurry is applied. P rates should also be reduced to account for P in concentrate feeds.

Fertilizer for reseeded

Apply sufficient P and K for reseeded pastures to get them back into production as soon as possible. Apply 25 units of P and 50 units of K to fields being reseeded. Apply additional P and K in fields with low soil fertility (Index 1 and 2).

Re seeding is also a good opportunity to apply lime where it is required to increase the soil pH.

Use Sulphur to improve growth response

Soils that are light textured or low in organic matter are often responsive to application of sulphur (S). Start applying S now in fertilizers on these soils.

Grass requiring S will look like it is deficient in N (stunted growth and yellowing of grass leaves). Look out for yellowing on the younger leaves nearer the top of the grass plants. This can be a sign of S deficiency. (If yellowing is on the older leaves, the deficiency is more likely to be N rather than S.)

Grazed swards should receive up to 16 units of S in total per year. For best results, split the application of S for grazing over a number of timings between now and July.

Apply 16 units of S to each cut of silage where response to S is expected. This should all be applied when closing for silage.

Don't over-apply S as it can impact on the availability of some trace elements.

Know your Nitrates limits

Nitrates rules will limit how much N and P you can use on the farm.

It is important to have a fertilizer plan prepared for your farm so that you know how much N and P you can use on the farm and to avoid penalties later from over-application.

K and S applications are not limited by Nitrates rules. Use sufficient K and S where P is not being applied.

Fertilizer Best Practice

Best practice with fertilizer application should be adhered to at all times:

Top tips include:

- Don't apply on waterlogged soils or if heavy rain is forecast.
 - Ensure the fertilizer spreader is properly set to the application rate required and to ensure uniform application.
 - Maintain appropriate set-back distances from water courses, field margins and habitats on the farm.
 - Stay Safe – Ensure equipment is fitted with appropriate safety features that are properly fitted and working. Avoid lifting bags where possible to reduce the risk of back injury. Be careful to avoid and injuries from accidents when moving and loading big bags. Take care if driving on uneven and sloping ground.
-

The Fertilizer Association of Ireland

"Promotes the efficient use of fertilizer to produce quality food in an economical and environmentally sustainable manner".

For more information on nutrient management, including code of best management practice for fertilizer, visit our website at: www.fertilizer-assoc.ie.

--oOo--

Issued by The Fertilizer Association of Ireland
1 May 2013

www.fertilizer-assoc.ie