



Media release

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### **Animal phosphate poisoning an avoidable risk**

Animal phosphate poisoning is an avoidable risk says Ballance Agri-Nutrients Head of Agro-Sciences Warwick Catto. As farmers go into lambing and calving season across the country, they need to take precautions to avoid their animals directly ingesting fertiliser says Warwick.

“Fluorine is a contaminant found in all phosphate fertiliser and can be harmful and in some cases lethal to stock, says Warwick. “Animals which ingest phosphate fertiliser demonstrate symptoms including diarrhoea, unsteadiness, excessive salivation, a drop in milk production, milk bloating, loss of appetite and loss of weight.”

Warwick says the risk of poisoning is at its worst when a dusty phosphate fertiliser is applied to damp pasture, with little or no rain falling in subsequent days. “Dusty fertiliser is likely to stick to the pasture, meaning the chance of ingestion can be higher. Using well granulated fertiliser or products that are drier, such as serpentine super, will reduce the risk.”

It is recommended that farmers applying fertiliser make sure there is a spelling period between fertiliser application and grazing. This involves removing the stock from the pasture for at least two weeks or until at least 25 mm of rain has fallen on the pasture.

Warwick says in practice this means that fertiliser application should be staggered, so that the stock always have recently unfertilised pasture to graze.

“Early spring is a good time to address your fertiliser needs as it’s best to topdress before stock are set-stocked for spring. At the moment it is recommended farmers stagger applications, by spreading on the part of the farm’s paddocks which have been most recently grazed.”

**ENDS**