

Media release

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### **Canterbury farmers should apply nitrogen before El Nino hits**

Canterbury farmers facing the possibility of very dry conditions should make the most of current moisture in the soil by applying nitrogen to their pasture now, says Ballance Agri-Nutrients. Warnings that an El Nino weather system is approaching, could mean warmer than usual temperatures for the east coast regions across the country, which spells bad news for farmers needing to maximise their pasture growth.

Ballance Agri-Nutrients Agro-scientist Jeff Morton says that after such a hard winter farmers are severely short of feed, hay and silage. Jeff says farmers should be applying strategic nitrogen now to promote growth while there is still some moisture in the soil.

“The signs are there for a serious drought. Sheep and beef farmers and those farms in the lower rainfall areas more than 10 km away from the foothills are likely to be hit hardest. Next month the northwest winds are expected to remove even more moisture from the soil, so farmers need to act now to protect what they have.

“Drought conditions will lead to a loss in the plants’ the ability to take up nutrients, so farmers need to act quickly while there is some moisture left.”

Ballance Technical Sales Representative for the North Canterbury/Marlborough region, Colin Sutcliffe, says pasture is so dry that farmers are already starting to irrigate.

“At the moment many Canterbury farmers are facing empty silage pits and have limited hay stocks. Farmers need to promote growth of pasture as well as hay and silage, to ensure they have enough feed to get them through the dry summer months.

“To get the best results from applying nitrogen we recommend farmers apply it to their best paddocks, normally young pasture on ground that has a good fertility history, first.”

Farmers can expect approximately 15 kg of dry matter per 1 kg of nitrogen applied if they apply now. Other nutrients (phosphorus and sulphur) should also be applied to help maximise the nitrogen response.

**ENDS**