



Media release  
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### **Making the most of new grass**

New Zealand has traditionally prided itself on its low-cost pastoral farming systems. Ongoing research into improving pasture species to support this system has seen a major improvement in pasture species. A regrassing programme introducing new species can enhance pasture production and farm returns, and autumn is a popular time of year to re-sow grass to make the most out of this feed source.

However, Ballance Agri-Nutrients Head of Agro-Sciences Warwick Catto explains that to get the maximum benefit from that pasture, it's important that it's growing high-quality feed.

Renewing pasture is not a cheap process — not only is there a loss of potential income while the paddock is taken out of production, but there are the direct costs associated with the cost of raw materials (herbicides and seed), land preparation (soil tests, lime and capital fertiliser applications) and labour (drilling or cultivation).

Mr Catto says that it's important, then, to make the process as effective and efficient as possible.

'If you've taken the time to soil test your paddocks marked for regrassing, applied lime to correct any pH problems, put on capital fertiliser to remedy soil fertility, sprayed off weeds, sown seed and kept off stock while that strikes, then you have the base for successful new pasture. But attention still needs to be paid to this new grass.

'The first grazing is critical. While you don't want to put stock in too early, it's equally important not to leave the grass to become too long either, otherwise clovers will be shaded out and their growth will suffer. If you grab a handful of grass and it tears, rather than pulls out of the ground, then the paddock is likely ready for stock,' says Mr Catto.

Mr Catto suggests farmers graze the paddock lightly, then apply nitrogen — around 65 kg urea/ha will be sufficient, to help grasses tiller and encourage clovers to spread their stolons.

'Repeat nitrogen applications after each grazing. For the first 18 months of its existence, clover in the new pasture will not be fixing nitrogen — or at least sufficient nitrogen to meet demand — so fertiliser nitrogen is vital for keeping pasture protein levels high.'

When the new pasture is about 18 months old, it is advisable to have herbage tests done to identify any deficiencies that might lead to poor plant health or to stock health problems. Invariably, testing like this to identify potential problems early — and then taking action to

remedy the issue — is cheaper and more effective than waiting until production losses indicate something is wrong.

For further advice contact your local Ballance technical sales representative on 0800 222 090.

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