
1 March 2010

Are you getting your phosphate from the right source?

Farmers planning their autumn fertiliser applications should consider the range of maintenance phosphate options available to them before they make their choice.

'Over time it is easy to carry on doing what we have always done, so every now and again it pays to look at the options available and challenge your thinking to get the best for your farming business,' says Ballance Agri-Nutrients Science Extension Manager, Aaron Stafford.

'For a long time, superphosphate was the fertiliser of choice for nearly every farmer in the country. However, farming changes, and farmers need more choice in the types of products they can use. Today, products include superten, pasturemag, pasturezeal, cropzeal, DAP, serpentine super and RPR. There is an ideal application for each of these products.'

Serpentine super is a good autumn fertiliser option for several reasons, points out Mr Stafford.

'This product not only supplies phosphate and sulphur, essential for maintaining pasture production, it also supplies magnesium, benefiting animal health by boosting Mg intake over autumn and winter, which can be important leading up to lambing or calving. Serpentine super contains 5.0% magnesium, 6.8% phosphorus and 8.4% sulphur.

'It may be the right choice for your pasture and stock, and it may also prove beneficial on an environmental-risk front. Serpentine super contains low water-soluble phosphate content but high citric-acid-soluble P content.

'Citric acid solubility is a good indicator of agronomic effectiveness - field trials (in Southland at Tussock Creek, as well as elsewhere in the country), have shown that serpentine super is as agronomically effective (i.e. it produces equivalent pasture responses per kg of phosphate applied) as fertilisers with higher water-soluble content such as superten.

'At the same time, its lower water-soluble phosphate content reduces the risk of P loss in run-off events that may occur soon after application. With regard to autumn fertiliser applications, this makes it a very suitable fertiliser type.'

Mr Stafford says if farmers are looking for nitrogen to boost pasture growth prior to winter, then another option is pasturemag. This product delivers the same performance characteristics as serpentine super, but also provides nitrogen.

Farmers should be talking to their Ballance Technical Sales Representatives on 0800 222 090 to determine options suitable for their farming requirements.