



Stay one step ahead and spread early

One of the best ways to ensure success with your pasture fertiliser program is to be ready when the autumn break comes. Incitec Pivot Fertilisers' technical agronomists, Lee Menhenett and Jim Laycock explain the benefits of spreading early.

Autumn is an important time of year for lifting pasture growth before it naturally slows during the cooler months.

For the best results in autumn, the right fertiliser should be applied at the right rate before the autumn break.

This ensures phosphorus is available to the germinating subterranean clover straight after the opening rains. Maximising autumn clover growth will directly and positively impact on winter pasture production levels.

The later SuPerfect® is applied, the lower winter production from subterranean clover and improved perennial grasses will be.

In short, you can't go too early, but you can be too late.

Research by Agriculture Victoria has shown that there are no pasture yield differences between phosphorus fertiliser applied in summer or autumn.¹

Applying early just means you are one step ahead and ready for the season to come.

SuPerfect does not require rain to move the phosphorus into the soil. A light dew, or minimal moisture from the soil or atmosphere is all that is required for the phosphorus to be released.

The movement of water soluble phosphorus from single superphosphate granules into the soil is virtually complete within 24 hours of application.

Phosphorus is quite immobile and won't leach away. The granule left behind is basically gypsum (calcium sulphate) and this will dissolve and move into the soil with the next rain.

While the Agriculture Victoria work also showed that applying phosphorus fertiliser earlier than the traditional autumn application did not increase the likelihood of phosphorus losses through run-off, it is still important to follow best practice.



This means avoiding spreading when ground cover is less than 70%. Bare soils are prone to shedding water, leading to erosion and taking valuable soil holding phosphorus and other nutrients.

Take care to prevent fertiliser from entering waterways and water storages.

Finally, do not spread fertiliser if heavy rain is forecast within four days.

This advice should be followed for all fertiliser spreading operations, not just summer spreading.

So why not plan to stay one step ahead and regularly fertilise pastures in summer?

From an operational perspective, it couldn't be better. You get the job out of the way, take advantage of freight and spreader availability and avoid the rush later on. From an agronomic perspective, there are no disadvantages.

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References:

¹ McLachlan, KD. (1961) Time of application of superphosphate and the yield of pasture on an acid soil, *Australian Journal of Experimental Agriculture and Animal Husbandry* . Vol 1, 81-84.

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