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## **Plan Fall Fertilization Programs Now to Improve Forage Quality, Profit Potential**

Mother Nature often dictates production decisions, and the 2001 season is no different for Northwest cattle producers. Several Oregon State University extension agents report that a drier-than-normal spring not only has producers facing serious water shortages, but skipping nutrient applications to pastures.

Well-fertilized pastures promote better grazing because they deliver forage with more protein and essential minerals. However, without adequate nutrient levels in the soil, cattle can run the risk of many health problems.

To help improve next season's forage quality and profit potential, Al Ludwick, Western Director of the Potash and Phosphate Institute, says it's never too early to plan a fall fertilization program. He suggests that cattle producers pay special attention to their potassium applications, especially when pastures have endured a dry season.

"Potassium remains a key element in forage crop establishment and year-to-year productivity," he says. "In addition to improving the crop's tolerance to drought when in proper balance with nitrogen, phosphorus, sulfur and magnesium, potassium ensures high-yielding quality forage."

Fertilizing in early fall and late winter can help increase forage supply in spring. To best determine forage potassium requirements, Ludwick suggests using a combination of soil testing and crop nutrient-removal information.

"The annual removal of potassium by forage crops equals about 60 pounds per ton of forage production," he says. "Soil test several good producing areas to help guide fall applications."

Producers can provide forages with the necessary nutrients in the form of potassium-magnesium sulfate (K-Mag®), according to Ray Hoyum, Vice-President of Market Development and Communications at IMC Global.

"A K-Mag program delivers potash, magnesium and sulfur in a water-soluble form that's readily available to any forage crop," he says. "These nutrients work immediately to help improve nitrogen and phosphorus efficiency and minimize the risk of grass tetany, a serious health condition in animals linked to a shortage of magnesium and calcium in forages."

Mined by IMC Global, K-Mag is a three-in-one combination that consists of 21 to 22 percent sulfur, 20 to 22 percent potassium and 10 to 11 percent magnesium.

"Since K-Mag contains sulfur, potassium and magnesium, producers can reduce the amount of these nutrients from other fertilizer sources in an overall mix," Hoyum says. "Plus, a low salt index and low chloride content in K-Mag are additional product features that can be beneficial for cattle producers during a dry season."



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