



For Immediate Release

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The Stockman Grassfarmer

-What's New in Grazier's Gear

Forage

Fertilization

Producers should plan fertilization programs for forages now to ensure that essential nutrients are at optimum levels prior to spring growth. Perennial and Italian ryegrass, alfalfa, clover and forage brassica crops, such as turnip, swede, rape and kale are highly productive and digestible feed sources for livestock, said Dr. Cliff Snyder, Midsouth director of the Potash & Phosphate Institute. They can supplement perennial cool-season pastures in August and September or extend grazing in November and December.

"Well -fertilized soils will deliver forages with more protein and essential minerals for livestock," he said. "Since nutrients are basic components of high-quality forages, there is no way to produce optimum yields or quality with sub-optimum nutrient supplies."

For example, most efficient nitrogen use depends on adequate, as well as, a balanced supply of potassium and phosphorus. Snyder suggested forage producers pay special attention to their soil's potassium level and to use soil test results to best determine requirements and guide applications.

"Potassium remains a key element in forage crop establishment and year-to-year productivity," he said. "When in proper balance with nitrogen, phosphorus, sulfur and magnesium, potassium ensures high-yielding quality forage."

For best results, fertilizer required for forage production should be broadcast and incorporated before establishment, applied with a drill at planting time, or applied by a combination of these two methods.

"If intended applications of potash and phosphorus were not completed this past fall, be sure to fertilize immediately before, or just after, the first spring growth occurs," he said.

As part of the fertilization mix, producers can provide forages with several necessary crop 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 said. "These nutrients work immediately to help improve nitrogen and phosphorus efficiency and minimize the risk of grass tetany in the spring, a serious health condition in animals linked to shortage of magnesium in forages."



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