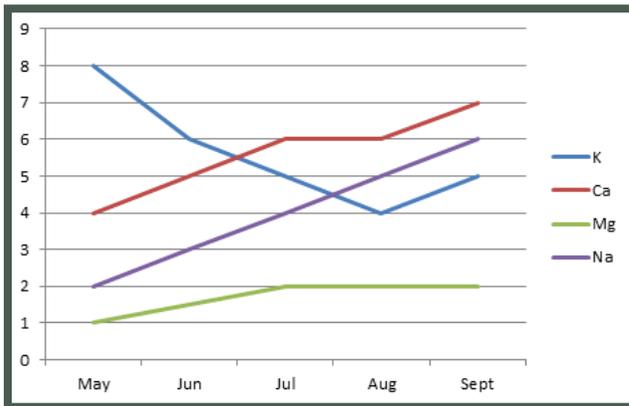


GRASS STAGGERS



In the spring, there is a plentiful supply of Nitrogen, Phosphate and Potassium creating a flourish of grass growth. During the growing season the amounts of available minerals taking up by grass varies considerably.



K (Potassium)
Ca (Calcium)
Mg (Magnesium)
Na (Sodium)

Optimum grass growth requires large amounts of Potassium and smaller quantities of Magnesium and Sodium. However the balance is very different for animals, more magnesium and Sodium is required with very little Potassium. Nutrient balance is essential to reduce the risk of mineral disorders.

The Problem

Sodium consumed by cattle and sheep is used to produce saliva which maintains a constant pH within the rumen. If the grass is low in Sodium the animal automatically substitutes the Sodium for Potassium, which in turn reduces the absorption of Magnesium from the rumen causing a deficiency in the blood.

Hypomagnesaemia is caused in cows when mg levels in the blood is less than 1.8m per 100ml.

To prevent an imbalance occurring, the best practice is to apply a regular Winter application of Sodium and Magnesium, reducing the risk of deficient Spring growth.

- The economic consequences can range from a 20% reduction in milk yield, to the loss of the animal.
- Correctly balanced applications of Nitrogen, Phosphate and Potash is essential to obtain the best yields of low cost on farm forage.

Sheep can also be affected by hypomagnesaemia; grass tetany, staggers or lactation coma due to the condition. It is associated with the improvement of pastures and spring growth, fairly common in ewes six weeks after lambing

This can be triggered by movement from one pasture to another or held on yard for short periods of time without feed. Any form of stress on the animal during the first few weeks after lambing may provoke a clinical attack. The only symptom that arises with sheep is slight tremors within the face muscles, otherwise the animal is usually found dead.



Springtime grasses have a nutritional imbalance with high water and Potassium content but low Magnesium and Calcium.

Grasses have a high requirement for Potassium. When fertilised intensively with Nitrogen, the grass dry-matter should contain 2.5% K. Less than this would indicate an insufficient supply of available soil K and the yield response to N would suffer.

This nutritional imbalance can trigger grass tetany, staggers or lactation coma due to the condition: HYPOMAGNESAEMIA

As the Summer progresses the excessive amounts of Potash is lost through removal of grass, decreasing the amount of Potash and increasing the other available nutrients Mg, Na and Ca.

Intensification of grazing stock and increased silage cuts contributes to the depletion of minerals. Tetany occurs on pastures low in Magnesium, low in Sodium and high in Potassium.

The view has evolved that staggers can be controlled by the supplementation of the pasture with Magnesium and by avoiding high applications of Potash early in the season.

Hypomagnesaemia is caused in cows when mg levels in the blood is less than 1.8m per 100ml.



SALTMIX

Trace elements are required in very small amounts; livestock require SALT on a daily basis as part of their diet. It is essential to promote saliva production and ensure optimum function of the digestive system.

The Solution

Sodium fertilisers will:

- Improve palatability of herbage
- Reduce the risk of hypomagnesaemia
- Give higher D values (digestible organic matter content)
- Increase sugar content

Benefits

- SALT improves the palatability of the sward, which in turn increases grazing efficiency of the pastures.
- SALT raises the D-Value of the grass, improving silage quality.
- SALT reduces the risk of Hypomagnesaemia by decreasing Potash levels in the leaf and increasing Magnesium levels. 50% of a plant/potash requirement can be substituted using SALT.
- SALT is cheaper than regular potash
- 1 Application for 2 crops saves spreading costs and time
- Provides 17% more K than Potash
- Use straight N or UREA to enhance cost savings

"The sheep are grazing the fields tighter.

Cattle were reluctant to graze the one field where Saltmix was not spread.

It has also encouraged clover regrowth in some of our fields" - Mr P.

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