

Pasture News

Maximise forage production

A slow start for winter pasture growth has resulted in fodder stockpiles running seriously low on many southwest farms. It's a scenario that highlights the importance of making the most of the opportunity this spring with fertilizer applications that boost fodder reserves.

Armed with soil analysis results and other useful tools like plant tissue analysis, growers can put a plan into place that will achieve maximum economic return for their fertilizer spend.

Often, the same paddocks are chosen for hay and silage production and it's a situation, that if not well managed, will mine nutrients from the soil. Table 1. below shows the approximate nutrient removal for cereal and mixed (ryegrass and clover) hay.

With improved genetics from new ryegrass varieties, Persian, balansa and sub-clover selections, hay yields

now often exceed 6 t/ha. A quick calculation shows this yield removes between 12 and 18 kg/ha P; 72 to 120 kg/ha K and 120 to 150 kg N/ha.

Fertilizer type and rate for this spring's fodder production should be matched to the paddock's plant composition, nutrient requirements and seasonal conditions.

The aim is to have a good thick stand of grass/legume without it being excessively bulky to the point where it lays over as this reduces light penetration and potential energy production in the hay or silage.

Caution should be employed if growers are just working out how much nutrition is removed in hay and silage and simply replacing that amount. Other factors often come into play like leaching and mineralisation. The soil will have a reserve of nutrients including nitrogen and sulphur in the form of organic matter.

These stored nutrients become available in spring through mineralisation when soils remain moist and warm up.

Generally, silage and hay fertilizers are used at rates of up to and not beyond 250 kg/ha in one application. In high production systems or where the season is favourable - such as an extended wet spring, there may be justification for rates beyond this. Better results will be achieved if higher fertilizer rates are split into two applications (e.g. 2 x 150 kg/ha applications three to four weeks apart after lock-up).

If rains are good this spring, it will make sense to follow a split application program where ryegrass is dominant. In this scenario, growers often apply HaySpecial or the NKS range of Summit fertilizers and then follow up later with Foddermax or fertilizers from the Summit nitrogen/sulphur range.

On a 10-year average, fertilizer this year is still relatively cheap and livestock prices appear firm. Fodder products at the moment are in short supply, so the current economics lean to using higher fertilizer rates in spring to boost production and safeguard summer feed. That is of course assuming spring rainfall is favourable.

Growers should call myself (Ralph Papalia) or Peter Warren if you need any specific advice.



By Ralph Papalia
Business Manager/
Agronomist
Bunbury depot

Table 1. Approximate nutrient removal (kg/t) of hay or silage

	Nitrogen	Phosphorus	Potassium	Sulphur	Calcium	Magnesium
Cereal hay	20	2	12	1.5	12	3
Mixed hay	25	3	20	2.5	9	4

Table 2. Fertilizer suggestions based on nutrition and pasture varieties

Paddock nutrition and pasture mix scenario	Product	Fertilizer rate
Some phosphorus required in spring. Paddock has predominantly ryegrass and some clover in the sward.	HaySpecial	150kg/ha to 250kg/ha*
Some phosphorus required in spring. Paddock has predominantly clover and some ryegrass in the sward.	Hay	
No phosphorus required in spring. Paddock predominantly ryegrass and some clover. The paddock has a long history of being cut for hay or silage and has low soil potassium test results.	NKS32	
No phosphorus required in spring with predominantly ryegrass and some clover, but has good soil test results for potassium	NKS21	
No phosphorus required in spring and predominantly clover with some ryegrass and low potassium soil test results	GrassBoost	

*Fertilizer rate will depend on a range of factors including yield potential, seasonal conditions etc.

Dairy farmer of the year

Summit Fertilizers would like to recognise the outstanding achievement of long-term client Vic Rodwell. In May this year he was announced Lion Dairy and Drinks' 2017 Farmer of the Year.

A former Western Dairy chairman and a board member for almost a decade, Vic was judged the best of the company's 550 milk suppliers around Australia and awarded by Lion as its best milk supplier nationally.

With his wife Denise, he runs Rodwell Farms at Boyanup. Their dairy produces more than six million litres of milk a year off a platform of 400 hectares.

Vic came home to the family farm more than three decades ago at the age of just 15. Back then they were milking 40 cows a day. At its peak now, the dairy has up to 800 cows that have to be intensively managed. The herd has a split calving, with cows calving either from February through April or August/September.

"We're transitioning to 70 per cent autumn calving in line with when Lion wants milk and production off our feed base. So, we're looking to get more out of our grass," Vic said

Summit Fertilizers Bunbury Depot Manager, Ralph Papalia, said the Rodwell's milk is of exceptional quality and produced in a supply curve that really suits Lion Dairy & Drinks' requirements.

"There's so much more to life on a dairy farm than milking cows," Ralph said. "Today's dairy farmers need to have a whole range of skills in order to run profitable and sustainable farm businesses.

"Vic and Denise run an exceptionally progressive dairy and have been a pleasure for Summit to work with. They take great pride in what they do and are totally focused on developing opportunities across a whole range of farming activities.

"They use exciting, world-leading technologies to help run their business and are very worthy recipients of the 2017 Lion Dairy Farmer of the Year award," Ralph said.

High tech pastures



A world-class dairy business fittingly describes the Rodwell's enterprise. Irrigated pastures, dryland production and run off blocks along with modern equipment see this property striving to maximise milk production. Leased land, run off blocks and heifer agistment complement the platform in the production of fodder and accommodation of young and dry stock.

Pastures are intensively fertilized on a rotational basis, and Summit soil and plant tissue testing has been incorporated into the management regime. Soil samples are GPS located on transects to monitor trends of nutrient status. Plant analysis happens up to four times a year.

Rotational grazing is employed with fertilizer applications made post grazing. Leaf stage is targeted at 2.5 – 3 ryegrass leaves, with pasture growth rates monitored by District Average Pasture Growth Rate numbers (Pastures from Space data), mean temperatures and continual paddock assessment. Due to the intensive nature of monitoring, management is moving away from standard (N, P, K, S) blends to more specific nutrient products produced by Summit. The fact that data is available on every paddock from soil and plant tests allows this management shift to occur.

Summit Fertilizers Bunbury Business Manager, Ralph Papalia (left) and Lion Dairy and Drinks' 2017 Farmer of the Year, Vic Rodwell, in Vic's Boyanup leafy turnip pasture.

Nutrient management zone maps have been created that identify areas of low, medium and high fertility. These maps visually highlight the varying levels of fertility that need to be considered when it comes to nutrient applications.

For 18 months, Vic has been pioneering precision irrigation through the use of Variable Rate Irrigation (VRI). VRI controls the centre pivot to provide Vic with the ultimate in site specific watering.

VRI is an emerging technology and it offers the potential for water control down to the individual sprinkler. In essence, individual sprinklers on the pivot are software controlled and can discharge more or less water depending on site needs.

Assessment of paddock variability in soil type, crop type, topography or even obstacles can all be managed as separate zones within the irrigated paddock. Vic can do things like avoid applying water over roads or waterways, or reduce application rates over low lying areas that already have enough water, to increase productivity and manage variability in the field.

For our business to stay healthy it needs to be constantly evolving

For close to 30 years, Summit Fertilizers has striven to offer growers a comprehensive range of innovative products and services, backed with excellent agronomic support, field trials, soil and plant analysis, coating and blending.

It's a great package, although Summit could never have survived without constantly evolving to meet the needs of growers. No business can survive today through standing still.

A constant in the business however, has been a grower need to deal with trustworthy people, be offered affordable pricing and receive fast response to any issues.

Yes, we deal direct!

Since the end of our agreement with Elders, many customers are now dealing directly with Summit. This change has been remarkably smooth and growers are very pleased with our order management and payment options.

Early last year we introduced our Fastpay Terms – four day Collect & Pay option and our Pay25 Terms – the Summit version of a 30 day account. Both are accessed through a direct debit payment system.

We now have hundreds of valued Summit customers with active credit accounts, with the new options adding value and flexibility to their business.

We also offer deferred terms

In the current season, Summit has introduced deferred terms credit to suit both dairy and cattle graziers, along with grain producers. It better times fertilizer payment to match growers' receipt of funds from produce.

Again, this initiative has been favourably received by customers. Comments have been complimentary about the turnaround time and the straightforward application process.

Our aim is always to keep things as simple as possible, but with enough flexibility to ensure ease of doing business with Summit. As such, all of your Summit orders, transactions, invoices and statements can be viewed on SummitConnect at all times. Our friendly team is always happy to take calls and answer queries.

Growers can contact Cheri Bowater, Summit Fertilizers Credit Manager, on (08) 9439 8903 to discuss the various credit options available.

N.B. Credit availability is subject to Summit approval. Terms and conditions apply.

Summit Fertilizers payment options

Many customers are now dealing direct with Summit. Check out some of the order management and payment options now available:

- BPay before collection
- Funds transfer before collection
- Cheque before collection
- Fast Pay – direct debit four days after despatch*
- Pay 25 – direct debit 25th of month following collection*
- Deferred Payment Terms - payment to Summit by 25 January*

**Credit approval by Summit required*

Plant analysis

Plant analysis is an excellent guide as to whether or not some nutrients are limiting growth.

It is a much better technique than soil testing for assessing trace element deficiencies such as copper, zinc, manganese, iron, boron and molybdenum and lesser macro nutrients of sulphur, calcium and magnesium.

Key Summit benefits are:

- independent laboratory
- rapid turnaround times
- wide range of nutrients measured

For more information on Summit plant analysis, growers should talk with their Area Manager.

Better connect...SummitConnect

SummitConnect enables Summit customers to keep in touch with all their fertilizer transactions.

With SummitConnect, information is available 24/7 via the Summit Fertilizers website. Customers can download a range of activities and transactions including:

- Statements
- Invoices
- Orders on hand
- Despatches
- Weighbridge dockets for individual loads

With SummitConnect, up-to-date information is available anytime from anywhere. Customers can even give access to their accountant

or consultant, saving the need to transfer documents. Getting connected is easy. Customers simply email us at:

summitconnect@summitfertz.com.au

You will be provided with a unique login. Alternatively, you can contact the Kwinana office on 1800 198 224 or (08) 9439 8999.

Your Summit Area Manager is also available to assist with how best to make SummitConnect a bigger part of your everyday business.



High quality pasture range

Summit offers farmers the widest range of pasture fertilizers in Western Australia. Even so, our extensive range is not the whole story. Quality products makes life easier and end up returning you more dollars. Uneven spreading caused by poor quality fertilizer results in irregular production and wasted fertilizer.

To see Summit's extensive range of fertilizers for pastures, look for the enclosed analysis sheet.

Bunbury depot strives to deliver excellent customer service

Summit Fertilizers Bunbury based Business Manager, Ralph Papalia, is proud to say that his depot strives to deliver the highest level of customer service for farmers and transport companies. From customer service to despatch, local operations personnel demonstrate a high level of professionalism and flexibility to ensure farmer needs are met.

When you arrive to collect orders from our Bunbury depot you'll be greeted with a smile and as soon as

your paperwork is processed and collected, you'll be directed to the load out point.

It's worth pointing out that the Bunbury facilities are extremely well maintained, clean and tidy, and offer customers great flexibility with loading. The Bunbury depot has facilities to do multiple product blends (up to 9 in a blend, including trace elements).

Products are also available in 1000kg bulka bags. Clients should pre-order and allow 24 hours (during

the busy time) for bulka bags to be filled and ready for pickup.

Drivers can direct staff on load placement to ensure axle weights comply with the current Certified Weighbridge Mass Management Scheme standards.

You may not be aware but some of the special things we offer include:

- extended despatch hours during periods of high demand; and,
- flexibility for booking times (we always do our best to fit you in).



The Summit Bunbury Depot can supply fertilizer in 1000kg bulka bags. Clients should pre-order and allow 24 hours (during the busy time) for bulka bags to be filled and ready for pick-up.

Ralph Papalia and Peter Warren are our southwest specialists

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Ralph came to Summit in the role of Business Manager at Picton in 2008. He's enjoyed that role ever since. After growing up on the family dairy farm in the Shire of Harvey, Ralph knew his passion was in agriculture and he went on to complete a B. Agric Sc. (Hons) from the University of Western Australia. Further studies while working has seen him achieve a M.Sc. Agric from UWA. He is also a Fertcare Accredited Advisor.

Ralph is responsible for the shires of: Harvey, Dardanup, Capel, Busselton, Bunbury, Collie, Augusta-Margaret River, Bridgetown, Manjimup, Donnybrook, Nannup, Boyup Brook, Waroona and Pinjarra.

Growers can also contact **Jenni McMeeken** at the Bunbury Depot - 9724 2700.

After farming in the Many Peaks area for many years specialising in canola and sheep production, Peter moved to Albany in 1998. He worked within the timber industry before joining Summit in 2012.

Peter holds a Fertcare Accredited Advisor Certificate.

He manages a diverse area from beef enterprises along the south coast to fence to fence cropping in the north and east. Peter covers the shires of: Albany (West) and Denmark, Tambellup, Cranbrook, Plantagenet, Broomehill and Katanning.

Growers can also contact **Natalie Thompson** at the Albany Depot - 6819 6300.