



**DairyCo**

**BATH & WEST**  
GRASSLAND UK

# GRASSLAND UK 2009 FACTSHEET

## Exploiting the value in farm manures

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Five years ago we viewed slurry as something to get rid of from our 140 autumn-calving dairy cows, then we realized it was actually worth a lot of money. We are keen to grow as much forage as possible while keeping costs to a minimum, so it's vital to use slurries and farm manure as part of the fertiliser strategy.

This includes understanding its value and controlling how much is applied, both on grassland and maize. focusing on the fertiliser values of the manures applied, no potash and minimal amounts of phosphate have been purchased in the last 5 years, with no reduction in crop yields or nutrient status of the soil.

Key points include:

- Plan where the nutrients in slurry and manure can best be used. This will require soil analysis results. We test fields for pH, phosphate and potash every 4-5 years.
- Ensure liming status is correct for crop growth and soil has a good structure – acidic and/or poorly structured soils will not respond to applied crop nutrients, be that manures or bagged fertiliser.
- Understand the nutrient content of the manures on your farm. Analysis is best, but unless a truly representative sample is taken, standard book values will be a good alternative.
- Do not apply potash rich manures where they are not needed, e.g. grazed grass (unless soil potash indices are below 2), will not require extra potash, save the slurry for potash hungry silage fields be that grass, maize or whole-crop.
- Know your application rates of manures and do not over apply. Excess manures will only waste nutrient which can be better targeted elsewhere on the farm.
- Remember manures contain appreciable amounts of nitrogen, just like bagged fertiliser. So try to apply manures when you would normally spread nitrogen fertilisers – not many go out between October and January with the fertiliser spreader!
- Balance the manures applied to the crop with bagged fertiliser to get optimum crop yields – manures will not necessarily supply all your crops nutrient requirements, usually nitrogen will be limiting.
- Focus on the value of manures and the legislation may just fall in to place!

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