

BGS Nutrient Wise Demos to show £100+/ha savings

The price of fertiliser, new restrictions and advice on manure use and NVZ rules, where they apply, mean few can afford to ignore the costs or value of nitrogen, phosphate and potash. A new BGS project has begun to show farmers the practical aspects and potential of being 'Nutrient Wise'. We hope many local grassland society and BGS farmer members will be able to visit the Devon site this autumn or in spring 2010

Research tells us that with 30% white clover in a grass sward, the clover will fix up to 200kg of nitrogen/ha. But the amount can vary and will depend on nitrogen use and the potential grass yield.

If clover is only relied on to produce 150kg/ha of nitrogen at the BGS Nutrient Wise Demo site, near Crediton in Devon, that would save £74/ha a year at current nitrogen prices.

But how do you get that clover in the ground, when you don't want to reseed the whole farm?

We are trying out four different ways of introducing clover into an existing sward.

Before the clover seed went on a soil test revealed that the pH was 5.7 and the K index was 1, says David Munday of the Creedy Associates team who are setting out the demos on David's farm. "Both these were outside the optimum for clover establishment so were addressed with 0.5t of ground limestone/ha and



Above: Over-seeding clover on existing pasture and seed being spread with slurry. Right: Seed being weighed for direct drilling.



80kg/ha of potash. The phosphate index was 3, so a maintenance dressing of 30kg/ha was applied."

To ensure no carryover of clover from the existing sward for demonstration purposes existing clover was sprayed off and the field was mown prior to drilling day - July 11th.

Clover came up well. But farming and more importantly the weather being what they are, the clover suffered from the damp conditions and faded away.

All methods had to be tried again on August 10 after the field was grazed hard by dairy cows and pelleted seed was used this time as it is towards the end of the recommended time for sowing clover seed.

The four methods were: three passes of a grass harrow and then broadcasting seed with a fourth pass of the harrow; drag harrowing the

plot then broadcasting seed; mixing seed with slurry and spreading it from a tanker; direct drilling. All plots were then rolled.

A second set of plots has been set up to show the benefits of wise slurry use, which can be worth £27-34/ha.

This area has been reserved for a late cut of baled silage to allow us to demon-

strate use of a splash plate v a trailing shoe v bagged fertiliser v farm yard manure v use of poultry manure and calculations of the bagged fertiliser required.

All farmer members of BGS and affiliated local grassland societies can visit free of charge, with those from the south west supported by the Duchy College Rural Business School Vocational Training Scheme - a Rural Development Plan for England-funded initiative.

Other groups or individuals should phone the BGS office to discuss their visit.

Farmers visiting the site on September 29th and 30th, hosted by David Munday, can:

- assess the establishment of clover
 - find out the costs of different establishment methods
 - see plots with varying percentages of clover
 - find out how to easily assess clover in fields
 - discuss concerns over clover in cow and sheep diets
 - see and discuss red clover benefits and management
 - discuss manure application methods - their costs, pros and cons, and calculations of application rates
 - plus, see and assess a full reseed drilled on the farm in July and discuss the management of this young ley.
- Further visits can be arranged from the end of March 2010.

If you would like to register to visit the BGS Nutrient Wise Demo this autumn or next spring please return this slip to the BGS office at Unit 32, Stoneleigh Deer Park, Stareton, Kenilworth, Warwickshire, CV8 2LY

Name.....Grassland Society.....Full BGS member yes/no
 Occupation farmer/non-farmer Enterprises dairy/beef/sheep I/we prefer morning/afternoon/either
 Number attending.....Names of other attendees.....
(use a separate sheet if booking for a large group)
 Address.....
 County.....Postcode.....Main holding number.....
 Telephone.....E-mail.....

We will contact you to book your places at one of the sessions. If you wish to come as a local society group please use one form for the main contact. Numbers at each session will be limited and must be booked in advance.