

BGS Nutrient Wise Demos open to visitors



BGS Nutrient Wise Demos is BGS's biggest investment in its future for many years and the first three groups totalling 55 people attended sessions at our pilot site in September. Jessica Buss reports

The first visitors to the BGS demo site included members of BGS, Devon Grassland Society, North Devon Grassland Society and the Gloucestershire Suckler Cow Club.

Their visits covered two themes, manure applications and introducing clover in an existing sward.

After a short session on how to easily calculate manure nutrients required and applied, using a Creedy Associates developed handbook, they were able to see a comparison of nutrients applied as



Top: Visitors from the Glos Suckler Cow Club. Left: 4%DM dairy slurry applied at 22m³/ha.

fertiliser, with slurry by two methods and two different solid manure types.

The area had been treated as if for a fourth cut of silage, although grass silage is rarely made on the farm.

Visitors found the cost savings possible revealing. But they were even more interested to see the amount of slurry or manure we had put on to a 1m sq area to show the application rates.

This looked far less than they expected at the rate applied, revealing how easy it is to under-value what is applied.

Creedy Associates, Brian Pain explains that occasionally weighing a tanker load of manure or slurry and estimating dry matter are critical for accurately applications. Doing this prevents over-application saving on purchased fertiliser or under-application which will reduce grass yields, he says.

It is also interesting to see

that the rest of the field, not fertilised in August had grown far less grass, adds host farmer David Munday.

The four different ways of introducing clover into a sward, with each 10% clover fixing 50kg of N/ha a year worth £74/ha a year in fertiliser, saw us searching for August sown small plants.

Small clover plants were present in all plots, with some variation in populations. But it was felt too early to conclude whether we have been successful in this field. However, the potential of mixing seed in slurry, despite risks of poor establishment, was of interest as on most farms it was a job already being done, so the only true cost was the seed.

This and a further slurry demonstration can be seen next spring, please return the form below to arrange a visit.

Project background and funding

The BGS demos aim to show the practical implementation of being Nutrient Wise, as well as the costs and financial benefits of doing so.

Plots have been set up for BGS by Creedy Associates on David Munday's farm at Sandford, Devon. We aim to bring groups of 20-25 to see these practical demonstrations.

Funding for the pilot year has come from BGS, with the aim of developing a scheme with maximum benefit to BGS and local society members, to find out the real costs of such a project and then seek funding for more sites.

We are grateful for financial support for the autumn event days from the Duchy Rural Business School and the Vocational Training Scheme (VTS) - VTS is a Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) funded initiative.

Funding to continue demonstrations in the south west has been applied for and we hope to spread this initiative into other BGS regions over the next 2-3 years.

If you would like to visit the BGS Nutrient Wise Demo site in 2010 please return this slip to the BGS office at Unit 32, Stoneleigh Deer Park, Stareton, Kenilworth, Warwickshire, CV8 2LY, or phone 02476 696600

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.

Visits will be free to VTS eligible farmers in the south west and all BGS farmer members. Other places will cost £60 a person or £30 a person for full BGS non-farmer members and corporate members employees.