

Over the fence

AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2011

Ag Solutions

AUSTRALIA

Helping Australia Grow

Change in direction with Winter Supplements...

David and Katrina Goodear, of Merriwa, in the Upper Hunter, are familiar with the importance of supplementing native pastures and the various options available to get their breeders through tough times.

Running cattle and turning off lambs on their mixed farming operation, the Goodears also grow grain and lucerne as well as operating a feedlot.

Minerals made the difference...

"I previously fed molasses and urea and my cattle slipped badly in condition when grazing native wire grass during Winter.

Last year I decided to continue with urea but I replaced molasses with MegaMin 10% Protein Meal.

This mix only cost us 10cents per head per day and our cattle came through Winter so much better than I have ever experienced before."

Mineral cravings...

"Because our cattle craved the minerals initially, extra salt was added to slow their intake.

During a 7-10 day rotation of paddocks it was also interesting to notice that the longer the cattle were in a paddock, the intake of minerals increased."



The convenience of MegaMin has been a blessing and a huge reduction in labour costs for the Goodears.

"I feed MegaMin lick blocks to our sheep and MegaMin loose supplement is fed out once or twice a week to our cattle.

Not having to mix molasses or numerous ingredients means even my wife can run the supplement out."

Don't be late...

With very little rainfall since November last year, David has started to supplement early, hoping to get his cattle through Winter as good as last year.

David sums it up... "It's important to supplement early because it's too late once you realise that your stock need something... when they start to slip in condition it's almost impossible to turn them around."

Our Phosphorus levels are increasing...



Despite regular applications of Super Phosphate, Grafton Dairy Farmer, Peter Weatherstone struggled to get his Phosphorus levels over 20-30ppm Colwell.

Since using NatraMin, soil tests have shown great improvement, and Phosphorus levels now range from 65 to 120ppm.

"Deregulation had a financial impact on us but because I wanted to maintain production, I decided not to skimp on fertiliser... however even though we were using increasing amounts, we weren't moving forward in production or profitability.

Our spreading contractor told me about the good results he had seen where NatraMin had been used on other properties and we made the change 5 years ago."

continued...

No SUPER for 5 years and our Phosphorus levels are increasing...

“It's encouraging to know that we are looking after our soil... and in return, it's looking after us.”

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“Since using NatraMin, the soil is physically softer and pastures are responding and growing well. Clover germination and growth has been the best we have seen.”

Soil Testing...

“AgSolutions assessed our soil management program and we now have more direction with where we are going. Our soil test results are more balanced since using NatraMin in our program, providing confirmation of the results we are seeing in our paddocks.

We don't have those huge deficiencies showing up and we are now simply fine tuning our program.”

5 years without Super...

“We thought after five years without Super we may need to apply more Phosphorus, but soil tests have shown that the levels of available Phosphorus have doubled despite not applying any Phosphatic fertiliser.

I now understand that minerals are essential for the release of Phosphorus and I believe that since using NatraMin, we have released the locked up Phosphorus from all the previous years of Super.”

Breaking the Urea habit...

“We have a 30 day rotation on our Rye grass and pastures and we used to top dress with Urea after every grazing.

Improved soil condition and good clover growth has allowed us to break the Urea habit. We now skip every second top dressing, which has reduced our chemical fertiliser costs.

We milk 200 cows on 300 acres and could milk more cows here now. Yes we've had a good season recently but over the last 3 years this place has never looked better.

Soil structure has improved, clovers have returned... and our production is up.”



Better conception and health...

“Not only is the evidence in extra milk, but the improvement in our herd health is confirmation that we are moving in the right direction.

Cows are cycling well and usually go back in calf on their first service. This certainly wasn't the case when we used high rates of chemical fertiliser.”

Seeing is believing...

According to Peter, “you won't know how good NatraMin is until you use it. NatraMin has certainly paid for itself and I'm more than happy with the results.

I emphasize to other farmers that NatraMin is not a quick fix and that one application won't do it. It is important to make NatraMin a part of your ongoing program.”



With reduced mastitis in their herd, Kym Harrison has good reason to smile!

Studies in the USA highlight the importance of minerals and trace minerals for herd health.

Fertility, mastitis, sore feet and eyes all have links to nutrition and in particular the role of minerals and trace minerals such as Zinc, Selenium, Iodine and Copper.

The reduction in clinical mastitis alone, with an average milk loss of 120 litres per cow per infection, is one worth pursuing.

Minerals vital for herd health...

Kilcoy dairy farmers, Neil and Kym Harrison, reinforce this fact with their on farm experiences.

Massive reduction in Mastitis...

This time last year, over 20 cows in their herd had mastitis at any one time. In June 2010, MegaMin (original mineral blend) was introduced and according to Kym, “eleven days after introducing MegaMin, the results were astounding.

This was the first week that we didn't have to call the vet out to sick cows. Now, we consistently have less than 4 cows with mastitis (only 1 at present) which is a huge saving in treatment costs, labour and increased milk production.

The health of our herd is visibly better with less sore feet and an increase in fertility. During the wet weather it was the minerals that pulled the cows through.

Our industry has faced tough times and we have cut costs where possible, but MegaMin is the one thing that is essential for our herd. Minerals help in so many different ways.”

MegaMin for Horses...

“Because our camp drafting horses are grazing Kikuyu, the minerals and Calcium in MegaMin are crucial to prevent big head. Our cows and horses are shiny and have never looked so good,” concludes Kym.



MegaMin blends now available with:

- Extra Sulphur
- Extra Phosphorus
- 10% and 50% Protein Meal

NOTE: MegaMin Extra Sulphur is not recommended for horses.

Unlocking the Phosphate Bank in the New England

New England beef producer, Keith Willcock believes he has found a way to unlock the Phosphate bank in his soil.



Phosphorus availability...

"Despite a Superphosphate history extending over 40 years, in 2006 Keith Willcock's soil tests showed Phosphorus levels of only 13 parts per million (ppm).

Since then his Tenterfield property has had three applications of NatraMin.

Four years later, in 2010, soil tests on the same paddock have shown that available Phosphorus has increased to 30ppm.

Increased clover...

According to Keith, "I'm very happy with the all round response in our country and even prior to the good season we've had, we have had a lot more clover.

I believe we are achieving more of a balance within our soil and at present see no point in using Superphosphate again while NatraMin is doing its job to unlock Phosphorus reserves in our soil."

Keith is one of the increasing number of farmers in the New England area who are remineralising their soil using NatraMin.

AgSolutions recommends NatraMin as an ideal fertiliser option for pastures that have had a history of Superphosphate or high analysis chemical fertilisers. If your pastures and clovers are not responding like they used to, give us a call on 1800 81 57 57.



Around the paddocks

with Gary Zerner, Senior Field Advisor

Do you have a Phosphate Bank in your soil?



If you have used Phosphate fertiliser in the past, then the answer to that question will probably be "YES".

CSIRO research... "It is thought that at best, just 20 per cent of Phosphorus applied by way of fertiliser is available for plant uptake in the year it is applied.

This means, that of the dollars spent applying Super Phosphate at a rate of 250kg per hectare (about 22.5kg of P) often just one tenth of this P (2.25kg) is immediately available to plants."

It is thought that each hectare of soil may hold up to 400kg of Phosphorus, with less than 4kg immediately available to crops or pasture." (Source: CSIRO article, Raiding the Phosphate Bank, 1997).

The first question we need to ask ourselves is "WHY?... why is only a small amount of applied Phosphorus fertiliser available to the plant?"

Perhaps part of the answer is to be found in separate research carried out by Co-operative Research Centre for Soil and Land Management where it was found that the

use of high levels of fertiliser can reduce the effectiveness of soil organisms. For example, high Nitrogen inputs reduce Nitrogen fixation and high Phosphorus inputs reduce the beneficial effects of mycorrhizae, which are responsible for the release of Phosphorus.

While monitoring soil test results, I have found it quite common to see that the amount of available Phosphate is only a small percentage of the total amount of Phosphorus in the soil.

For example, in one soil test, there was 9ppm of available Phosphorus but 214ppm of locked up Phosphorus.

"For maximum response to Phosphatic fertilizers, (such as starter fertilizers or Super) adequate quantities of secondary and trace elements are required." (Source: Fertiliser Industry Handbook).

Since most fertilisers do not include trace minerals there is an obvious gap in many fertiliser programs. Soil tests continually show that trace minerals are becoming deficient, meaning that trace minerals may be the weak link in the chain.

Water soluble fertiliser can give a quick boost to a crop but as soil is becoming more demineralised, many farmers are finding that they have to use increasing amounts to get the same result.

It has taken decades for your soil to get to where it is now and we are not here to tell you that the effects of declining soil fertility can be fixed overnight.

In this newsletter, two farmers have shared their experience of how NatraMin has assisted to release locked-up Phosphorus.

NatraMin contains broad spectrum minerals and trace elements and is formulated to stimulate the biological activity in your soil, helping to address the 3 aspects of soil fertility; Nutritional, Structural and Biological.

Soil testing can save you thousands of dollars by preventing the expense of incorrect blends or rates of fertilisers.

So, take the first step to making a change. If you would like to arrange for a soil test to be performed, or would like a second opinion on an existing soil test, give us a call on 1800 81 57 57.



“MegaMin caters for all areas and all seasons.”

Peter (left) and Craig Edwards of Edwards Rural: “MegaMin has done a great job in our Phosphorus deficient country and has also ensured that our stock maintained good condition last Winter.”

Craig manages the 9000 acre south-east Queensland operation that runs over 1100 steers and 300 breeders.

The string of properties are a combination of native and improved pastures where steers are grown out for the jap bullock market.

Soil Tests assist to provide a guide to stock requirements...

AgSolutions performed soil tests as part of their pasture improvement and forage program and this also provided an insight into livestock nutrition requirements.

Minerals and trace minerals are now an integral part of their supplementation program.

Phosphorus deficiency...

“Steers didn’t perform in our native grass areas which were Phosphorus deficient and bone chewing and botulism was a big concern.

In these areas, we now supplement year round with MegaMin Extra Phosphorus because it also provides a broad range of minerals.

Intake variations did occur throughout the season however our cattle have stopped chewing bones.

We use MegaMin lick blocks for our breeders throughout summer and this has really improved the performance of stock grazing our lighter country.

Intake varies and the cattle on our basalt soil are not chasing the minerals or Phosphorus as much.”

Cattle utilised the dry fodder...

“Last year our native grasses hit a severe protein drought in winter so we used MegaMin protein blends for our breeders until the season broke.

These supplements did a good job on our cows and enabled them to utilise the dry fodder.

Prior to this, with the tougher seasons, our cows weren’t cycling and conception levels were down to 60%. Since supplementing with MegaMin there has definitely been an improvement.

MegaMin



Protein Blends

broad spectrum minerals with either 10% or 50% Protein Meal

Getting the most from your dry feed...

Many areas have experienced a good start to Winter compared to previous years when dry feed was in short supply by Autumn.

Your standing dry feed provides the cheapest form of energy, however with the onset of frosts, the protein and minerals will decline, increasing the likelihood of deficiencies and limiting stock performance.

When extra protein is needed...

The manure is a quick guide to feed quality. If the manure is starting to “stack up” instead of a loose pat then fibre is high and protein is low.



The benefits of true protein...

MegaMin protein meal blends (10% and 50%) utilise protected protein meals which break down slowly, releasing Nitrogen to the rumen microbes for the digestion of mature fodder.

This means that from one intake, ruminants can graze longer, providing a safe and longer lasting option than Urea.

MegaMin

Lick blocks and loose supplements

For details of your local stockist, call 1800 81 57 57

For answers to your soil fertility and animal nutrition questions, give us a call and talk to one of our trained Field Advisors.

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