West Virginia Pasture Management

Fertilization

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for W. Va. Grassland Limited Resource Farmer Program

What

Adding the necessary plant food to the soil to enhance plant vigor and growth.

Why

This practice will provide a potential to:

1. Produce more forage.
2. Improve forage quality.
3. Increase carrying capacity.
4. Increase animal performance.
5. Reduce soil erosion.

How

Fertilizer can be applied as follows:

1. By hand
2. Pull-behind tractor spreader
3. Three-point-hitch tractor spreader
4. Spreader truck
5. Helicopter
6. Airplane

Kinds of Fertilizer To Use

Fertilizer materials are sold in a variety of analyses. In Central West Virginia the most commonly used fertilizer analyses for pastures are those containing phosphorous and/or potassium.

1. 0-46-0
2. 0-20-20

Kinds of Fertilizer Not to Use

Do not use any nitrogen-containing fertilizer on a pasture that is composed of 30% or more legumes.

When

Fertilizer should be added when soil tests indicate a need.

Fertilizer application should be delayed two to six months after lime has been applied. The delay reduces the risk of the lime and fertilizer reacting with each other rather than the soil.

Rugged terrain and machinery access makes fall application more practical.

Where

Apply fertilizer first to those soils that have the greatest natural production potential. This can be determined from your local County Soil Survey.
Summary

Establish a fertilization program for your farm. Have your soil tested every two to three years. Know what the main species are that compose your pasture. Add fertilizer according to your soil test results. If terrain is rugged, add extra phosphorous to reduce the application frequency. Fertilize soils that have the best production potential first.

Where to Get Help

For more information about fertilization, contact your local office of the Soil Conservation Service or the West Virginia University Extension Service. They are listed in the telephone directory under "U.S. Government" and "West Virginia," respectively.

Fall 1991