

Case Study

Grassland silage production doubles using Calcifert Lime

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When Lorna and Keith took over the running of the family hill farm in 2014, the improved pastures on the farm did not produce enough silage for them to be self-sufficient. To make up the shortfall an additional 100 bales of silage were bought in at an average price for the area of £20/bale. Annually this mounted up to a cost of more than £2,000.

Lorna's day job is a FACTS qualified advisor, so taking note of her own advice; she tested the soil of the improved land to understand the pH levels. Soil pH levels were low and were therefore affecting fertiliser efficiency.

Application

The recommendation was to apply Calcifert Lime at a rate of 400kg/ha. This application rate was spread in both 2015 and 2016. In total 12 tonnes of Calcifert Lime has been used on the pasture over the last two years at a cost of £1,440. Apart from the application of the lime, fertiliser policy has not changed on the 15.4 ha (38 acres) that are used for silage making.

Results

The usual production from this area was 140 bales weighing 500kg each. Production increased in 2015 by 80 bales and in 2016 by 180 bales. The result being that the farm is now self-sufficient and in fact now has a surplus of silage.

Financial Benefits

During the two years that Calcifert Lime was applied, the value of the increased production has more than outweighed the cost of the lime application. The partial budget below shows how this change in fertiliser policy has resulted in an overall profit improvement of £5,760 for the farm over the two years, this equates to a per hectare improvement of £187/ha/an.

Extra income		Lost income	
Yr1 extra 80 bales	£1,600		
Yr 2 extra 180 bales	£3,600		
Total income gained	£5,200		£0
Costs saved		Extra trading costs	
100 bales not purchased	£2,000	12 tonnes Calcifert Lime	£1,440
Total costs saved	£2,000	Total extra costs	£1,440
Total possible gains	£7,200	Total off set	£1,440
Change in profit		£5,760	

Continued over...

Improvements

The improved performance of these pastures has not been limited to just the silage production other observations that Lorna and Keith have noted include:

- Better quality forage
- Cows in better condition
- Stocking rate on the improve pasture increased
- No change in fertiliser policy other than the inclusion of Calcifert Lime
- The ability to spread the Calcifert Lime when they want and conditions suit.

With the results achieved to date the policy moving forward on the farm is to regularly apply Calcifert Lime at a lower rate annually to increase the availability of all the nutrients required from the soil and improve the efficiency of the fertiliser used.

Summary

Lorna's opinion about their use of Calcifert Lime is simple; " Calcifert Lime has transformed our silage yields and overall pasture performance."

The improvement figures shown in this case study demonstrate that liming should not be overlooked, and put simply - can farmers afford not to lime? Soil has to be at the right pH to for grass to perform, and once the soil pH is corrected, fertiliser will work much more efficiently and profitably, and as a result lime should always be the first item on an annual fertiliser plan,

About Calcifert Lime...

Calcifert granulated lime is proven to neutralise soil acidity. It is suitable for all crops including grassland, cereals, fruit, vegetables, oilseed rape, vines and hops.

Made from fine limestone flour combined with a water-soluble organic binder, Calcifert consists of hard granules of between 2 and 5mm in diameter, produced in the UK from limestone mined in the UK.

It can be easily applied using a tractor mounted fertiliser spreader, providing flexibility to farmers and growers to spread the required amount, at the right time, exactly where it's needed.

