



Fertilising Dairy Pastures

**A manual for use in the Target 10
Soils and Fertilisers Program**

**Compiled and Edited by
The Target 10 Soils and Fertilisers
Statewide Activity Team**

Second Edition

Dairy Australia

**Department of
Primary Industries
Victoria**

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**United
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of Victoria**

FERTILISING DAIRY PASTURES

Prepared by the Soils and Fertilisers Statewide Activity Team of the Target 10 Program

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Foreword

Victorian dairy farmers are amongst the most efficient dairy producers in the world. To survive in this competitive industry, the production and utilisation of pasture as our main feed source will be the key to the future success of our dairy industry.

The Target 10 Project's original objective was to focus effort on achieving improved farm profitability through increased pasture consumption. This has been achieved through participation of the dairy farming community in the Target 10 pasture and nutrition programs and adoption of information gained.

A large number of farmers completed these programs and were ready to develop new skills to improve farm profitability. One of the key areas of interest identified by the farming community was the development of a better understanding of soils and fertilisers due to concern that this is a complex area with conflicting advice.

These concerns were addressed by the introduction of the Soils and Fertilisers Program. The program was, and continues to be, developed in cooperation with the farming community, fertiliser and dairy industry representatives, staff from The University of Melbourne, and research and extension officers from the Department of Primary Industries Victoria. It is now a major component of the Target 10 Feedbase project, and the Soils and Fertilisers Program is offered across the dairying areas of Victoria.

The aim of the Soils and Fertilisers Program is to enable farmers to make more informed, cost-effective fertiliser management decisions. Pasture production depends on sound use of fertilisers, and it is important to understand soil conditions if best results are to be achieved from fertiliser use. Regular soil testing is necessary to make informed decisions on fertiliser use, and the ability to interpret these results is the key to making the most cost-effective fertiliser choice. It is also important to understand the balance of nutrients in our farming systems.

The environmental impact of nutrients lost from our farming systems can be severe. An improved understanding of nutrient management will assist in the well-being of our waterways and in maintaining a healthy environment well into the future.

This manual has been developed as a source of reference material for use during the Soils and Fertilisers Program and serves as a valuable resource to the participants in future years. It covers many of the topics

in detail and assists farmers to make a range of decisions on fertiliser use. The loose-leaf format of the manual allows and, hopefully, entices farmers to collect and place into this manual other relevant and useful soils and fertiliser information.

A key input into the development of the Soils and Fertilisers Program has been provided by the end users of the information: the dairy farming community. I would like to thank those people for their help.

The program is closely monitored and changes are made to ensure that the information delivered is accurate, practical and up to date. To those that have assisted in the development of the program, I thank you for your support. To each of you who attend the program, I hope that you will find it provides information that works.

John and Naomi Pye
Dairy Farmers, Bessiebelle

John is currently the Chairman of the Target 10 Statewide Executive



Acknowledgments

This manual, *Fertilising Dairy Pastures*, is a resource manual for use by farmers when they participate in a Target 10 Soils and Fertilisers Program.

This manual and the Soils and Fertilisers Program are the culmination of many hours of work by a wide range of people involved in the dairy industry from all over Victoria. A Statewide Activity Team has overseen the development of this program. The team members in the early stages of development were Helen Chenoweth, Gregg Cook, Kate Dawson, Geoff Drysdale, Alex Goudy, Frank Mickan, Daryl Poole, Phil Shannon, and David Tucker of the Department of Primary Industries Victoria; David Pasztaleniec of the Macalister Research Farm; and Sylvia Vagg from The University of Melbourne.

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Many of the above people also present components of the Soils and Fertilisers Program, along with representatives from educational institutions and the fertiliser industry and other staff from Department of Primary Industries Victoria.

During the initial development of this program, many individual farmers, farmer groups, and farmer-led steering committees provided guidance and feedback on all aspects of the program. The

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- The Target 10 Pasture Working Group in the Northern Irrigation and Southern Riverina Region.
- The Target 10 Committee in the South West Region.
- The Target 10 Committee in the North East Region.
- The Target 10 Gippsland Region subcommittees of West Gippsland, South Gippsland, and Macalister and East Gippsland.
- The farmers who participated in the original pilot programs in the South West, South Gippsland, West Gippsland, and Northern Irrigation regions. Their comments and suggestions concerning the manual and the program overall have been highly beneficial to the farmers participating in later programs.
- Respondents to the Soils and Fertilisers Program survey.

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