

# Post-drought feed management & dealing with feed shortages

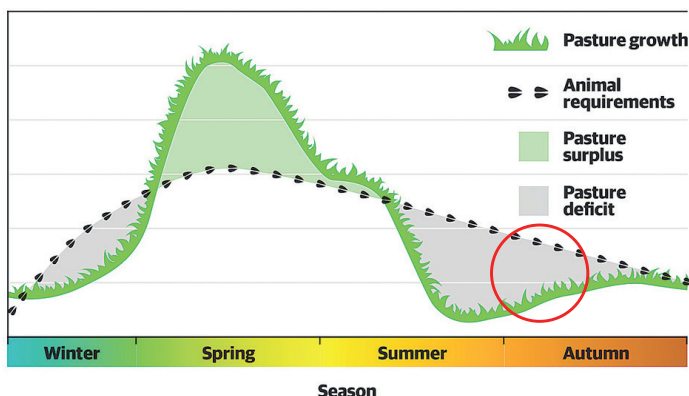
While we're all happy to see the rain when it comes, for many it's a case of too little, too late.

Our team are starting to see a real shortage of feed on farm and, combined with the backlog being experienced at the meat processing plants, many of you will be carrying more animals as we head into winter.

Your local nutrient specialist is available to help you manage your winter feed and animal nutrition requirements to keep your stock in good condition. The following drought recovery advice equally applies to feed requirements at times when you carry extra animals over winter.

- Once drought-breaking rain arrives, apply light rates (25-50 kg N/ha) of SustaiN or PhaSedN/PhaSedN Quick Start
- Spell pastures for 4-6 weeks after applying nitrogen (N) if possible
- Use supplementary feed to reduce the risk of nitrate poisoning
- Wait until the drought breaks before taking soil tests
- Apply phosphate, sulphur and potassium fertiliser if soil fertility is below optimum
- If fertiliser budget is limited, concentrate on the most productive areas of the farm

## Pasture growth and animal requirement curves



- Nitrogen applications should be tactically applied in autumn to reduce the gap between supply and demand (indicated by the red circle)
- N will dramatically increase the supply curve at this critical time after the drought breaks

## How does Nitrogen compare?

Nitrogen is well known to be consistently one of the most cost-effective forms of supplementary feed. Depending on the purchase prices, typical feed costs are as follows:

Supplement	Cost (cents/kg DM)
SustaiN	10 - 18
Baleage	40 - 60
Hay	30 - 50
Concentrate e.g. maize grain	60 - 80

*Note: the higher end of the price range reflects applied and/or feeding out costs, as at March 2020.*

## Conservative farm example of nitrogen application due to extended dry conditions:

- Pasture covers at 1 April = 1,000kg DM/ha
- Ideal target pasture cover = 1,800kg DM/ha. Difference = 800kg DM/ha
- SustaiN applied at 65kg/ha (30kg N/ha)
- Response rate of 15:1kg DM/kg N applied

$30\text{kg N/ha} \times 15\text{kg DM/kg N} = 450\text{kg DM/ha}$

If the variables changed, e.g. application rate is now 45kg N/ha and response rate is 18:1,  $45\text{kg N/ha} \times 18\text{kg DM/kg N} = 810\text{kg DM/ha!}$

## Nitrogen can significantly increase pasture covers and fill large deficits.

### Associated benefits include:

- Can feed extra lambs (lambs on the ground unplanned due to restrictions at the works)
- Have better covers to feed ewes and hoggets well during winter
- Feed available to flush ewes pre-lambing
- Better conditioned ewes/hoggets meaning increased lamb survival, increased milk production, higher weaning weights, more meat sold

### Key points to remember:

- The level of response to fertiliser nitrogen will vary depending on factors such as soil temperature and moisture, and the level of nitrogen deficiency in the soil
- The response will also be dependent on whether or not soil moisture levels are maintained after N is applied
- Always consider nitrate poisoning and methods to control this, e.g. supplementation, leaf testing, grazing behaviour