

FERTILIZING SPORTING FIELDS

(Queensland, Northern New South Wales Factsheet)

January 2004

ESTABLISHMENT

3 to 4 months before planting: If gypsum, lime or dolomite is required, it should be applied as far ahead of establishment as possible, while the ground is being worked up.

In the 3 weeks prior to planting: Apply Incitec Pivot CK 55 (13.5%N 14.2%P 11.9%K) at 250 kg/ha, and work it into the soil just prior to or when sowing the new grass species or laying down turf. The use of a fertilizer with a high phosphorus content such as Incitec Pivot CK 55, compared to that used on established fields, is recommended when establishing a new playing surface.

MAINTENANCE

Incitec Pivot CK 88 (15.1%N 4.4%P 11.5%K) and Nitrophoska Blue Special (12.0%N 5.2%P 14.1%K) are popular top-dressing fertilizers for lawns and playing fields.

Incitec Pivot Urea (46%N) can be used to apply extra nitrogen.

A basic program for a couch grass playing field is:

| Time | Product | Rate |
|------------------|--|--------------|
| September | Incitec Pivot CK 88 or BASF Nitrophoska Blue Special | 300 kg/ha |
| Late October | Incitec Urea | 100 kg/ha |
| December | Incitec Pivot CK 88 or BASF Nitrophoska Blue Special | 300 kg/ha |
| January-February | Incitec Pivot Urea | 100 kg/ha |
| March | Incitec Pivot CK 88 or BASF Nitrophoska Blue Special | 300 kg/ha |
| Mid-May | Incitec Pivot Urea | 100 kg/ha |

Couch grass grows more slowly over winter, and is less responsive to nitrogen fertilizer at this time, so fertilizer can be applied less frequently during the cooler months of the year.

If the field has been over-sown with winter-growing grasses such as Rye grass, e.g. for football, an additional application of Incitec Pivot CK 88 or Nitrophoska Blue Special at 300 kg/ha or Incitec Pivot Urea at 100 kg/ha may be considered during the winter months.



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Fertilizer should be applied to dry grass. Leaf burn can occur if application is made to grass moist with dew or very light rain, unless moderate to heavy rain or irrigation follows to wash the fertilizer from the foliage into the soil.

It is best to water or irrigate the fertilizer into the soil soon after application (if rain is not received). Fertilizer application should be programmed for the same day as the field is to be irrigated. If this does not occur, fertilizer which lodges on leaf surfaces may dissolve in overnight dew, and burn the foliage. Watering the fertilizer in also minimises the risk of any gaseous nitrogen losses to the atmosphere, which can occur after the surface application of many nitrogen fertilizers. 10 to 15 mm of irrigation or rain should be adequate.

Watering the fertilizer in also avoids the risk of accidental ingestion by children, pets or wildlife.

PETS AND WILDLIFE

While the risk is slight, the ingestion of freshly-applied fertilizer may affect the health of grazing animals and wildlife, and in isolated incidents result in deaths. If practical, it is best to remove animals from areas being fertilized, and not to readmit them until after rain is received or irrigation applied, and regrowth occurs. This minimises the risk of direct ingestion of fertilizer, and nitrate poisoning from young regrowth.

AREAS

A hectare (ha), if you are not familiar with large areas or metric units, is 10 000 m² (square metres). It is best visualised as a 100 m square, i.e. an area of 100 m by 100 m.

A field with the dimensions of 100 m by 50 m is 0.5 ha.

FOR MORE DETAILED INFORMATION:

This Fact Sheet contains brief Use Directions only, which by necessity are of a general nature. Fertilizer programs may need to be varied depending on the grass species being grown, the soil's fertility, and cultural practices.

More detailed advice on fertilizing playing fields is presented in the Agritopic on "Fertilizing Sporting Fields (Qld and Northern NSW)".

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