



# FERTILISING SPORTING FIELDS (Northern NSW and Queensland)

This Fact Sheet contains basic information on fertilising fields used for playing sport. It should be read in conjunction with the Fact Sheet on "Fertilisers for Recreational Areas". A more detailed Agritopic is also available on this topic.

## ESTABLISHMENT

### Soil Amelioration

If lime, dolomite or gypsum is required, apply it when the ground is worked up for the first time, and thoroughly incorporate it into the soil. Ideally this should be done three months before planting.

### Planting

The use of a fertiliser high in phosphorus (P) is recommended when establishing a new playing field. Phosphorus has a longer residual life in the soil than nitrogen (N) and potassium (K), so it can be used at higher rates early on. Building up the soil phosphorus level encourages early and strong root growth and development.

In the days or last couple of weeks before sowing the grass seed or laying down turf, apply one of the following Incitec Pivot blends, and then incorporate it into the top 5 - 10 cm of soil.

- Complete Mix 1 (7.7 % N – 9.5 % P – 9.6 % K) at 350 – 450 kg/ha (3.5 – 4.5 kg/100 m<sup>2</sup>) or
- Croplift® 800 (8.1 % N – 10.5% P – 10.0 % K) at 350 – 450 kg/ha (3.5 – 4.5 kg/100 m<sup>2</sup>) or
- CK 55 (7.9 % N – 10.5% P – 10.0 % K) at 250 – 300 kg/ha (2.5 - 3 kg/100 m<sup>2</sup>).

## MAINTENANCE

Complete NPK fertilisers such as Incitec Pivot CK 88® (15.1 %N - 4.4 %P - 11.5 %K) and Nitrophoska Special (12.0 % N – 5.2 % P – 14.1% K), which are high in nitrogen and

potassium and lower in phosphorus, are popular top-dressing fertilisers for lawns and playing fields.

On sporting fields planted to Couch Grass, either of these products can be applied on three occasions each year, in September, December and March, at 300 kg/ha per application (3 kg/100 m<sup>2</sup>).

On fully irrigated sporting fields that are subject to regular use, supplementary applications of nitrogen as Incitec Pivot Granular Urea (46%N) may be made in between these applications, i.e. in late October, January/February and the late autumn (mid-May), at 100 kg/ha per application, particularly if the field is lacking vigour.

In the above fertiliser program, fertiliser is applied on a less frequent basis over the cooler months of winter, as grass growth from summer active species such as Couch is slowed at this time of year.

If the field is to be over-sown with winter-growing grasses such as Rye Grass, e.g. for football, apply a scheduled application of CK 88 or Nitrophoska Special before planting, and again at 300 kg/ha during the winter months.

It is best to water the fertiliser into the soil. Where possible, this should be done soon after fertilising and on the day of application. Fertiliser granules and dust that lodge on plant leaves may dissolve in overnight dew and burn the foliage.

Applying fertiliser when rain is forecast may avoid the need to water the fertiliser in, provided enough rain falls to wash the fertiliser from the foliage into the soil. 10 mm of rain in the one fall should be adequate for this to occur. Light rain or showers will have the same effect as dew, enough to dissolve the fertiliser but not enough to wash it off the leaves and into the soil.

The risk of leaf burn is increased if fertiliser is applied to wet grass, causing the fertiliser to stick to rather than fall through the foliage, and no further rain is received.

Watering the fertiliser in also minimises the risk of any gaseous nitrogen losses to the atmosphere, which can occur after the surface application of many nitrogen fertilisers.

## **PETS AND WILDLIFE**

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

## **AREAS/UNITS OF MEASUREMENT**

A hectare (ha) is 10 000 m<sup>2</sup> (square metres). It is best visualised as a 100 m square, i.e. an area of 100 metres by 100 metres.

## NOTE

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

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