

**PRESS RELEASE:****New pasture growth stimulant worth a look**

**Dairy farmers will be keen to get as much pasture feed as possible this winter, and should consider trialling a new pasture growth stimulant on some of their paddocks in 2007.**

The new product is called ProGibb SG®, and contains a growth regulator that acts to increase cell size and stem elongation in plants.

The manufacturers report how ProGibb SG® is best used by spraying onto healthy pastures in early winter, with grazing deferred for 3 to 4 weeks after spraying. In trials interstate, they report how ProGibb SG® boosted winter growth from healthy perennial pastures by 300 to 600 kg/ha in the month after treatment. They suggest that phalaris is the most responsive grass, but that good responses can be obtained from well-established Italian and perennial ryegrass pastures too.

But the manufacturers stress that good responses are only obtained if sprayed onto healthy perennial grasses grown on fertile soil. Results will be disappointing if used on weedy, thin or infertile pastures.

Richard Prusa, Elders' Agronomist at Strathalbyn trialled ProGibb SG® on an established phalaris pasture at Warren Jacobs' dairy farm at Mt. Compass last July. Sections of the paddock were either left untreated, fertilised with urea, sprayed with ProGibb SG® or treated with urea fertiliser plus ProGibb® spraying.

Greg Mitchell, a local private agronomist, inspected the trial three weeks after spraying, and visually assessed the extra growth from ProGibb SG® to be between 300 and 400 kg/ha. "There seemed to be a significant growth response to the ProGibb SG® here, regardless of whether urea fertiliser was applied or not" Greg said.

"The extra growth seemed more pale and stemmy, but a Feedtest indicated forage quality was maintained. "Cows readily ate all extra growth at the next grazing, with no detrimental effect on pasture growth for the rest of the year" Greg said.

There is some debate interstate about whether ProGibb SG® sometimes stimulates extra winter growth at the expense of spring production. This may be likely where soil moisture is limited, but no clear cut trend seems apparent. "And even if it does sometimes suppress spring growth, the transfer of forage production from spring to winter would still be worthwhile on many dairy farms" Greg said.

Richard and Greg suggest that dairy farmers should trial ProGibb SG® on a few of their own pastures this year, to learn how it works in their own system. "With treatment costs of \$10 to \$20/ha plus spraying costs, ProGibb® seems to be a cost-effective way to boost winter growth from well-managed pastures" they said.

But they agree with the manufacturer's recommendations about responsive pastures. Richard noted the Mt. Compass trial involved a healthy, well fertilised, phalaris pasture, and said that weedy or infertile pastures may not respond to ProGibb SG®.

When using ProGibb SG®, farmers should follow label instructions regarding spray water volumes, addition of wetting agents, and compatibility with pesticides.

For more information: contact Fiona Hill, Sumitomo Chemicals (0438 864 498) or your rural merchandiser.

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