



EFFECTIVE MAGNESIUM SUPPLEMENTATION CRUCIAL, NUTRITIONIST WARNS

Livestock farmers are recommended to put even more of an emphasis on effective magnesium supplementation around turnout this spring, particularly for lactating cows and ewes.



David Thornton,
Rumenco Technical Manager

That's the advice from Rumenco technical manager David Thornton, who says steadily rising pasture potash levels are depressing magnesium availability in the rumen.

"Analysis of average potassium levels in spring grass reveals an upward trend, probably due to

increased slurry and muck applications rather than any extra usage of potash fertilisers, but the danger of magnesium 'lock up' and threat of grass staggers is very real this year," he warns.

"For example, the dairy cow requirement for potassium is only 1-1.4% of dry matter intake, so the levels in grazing alone far exceed this need even before any other dietary ingredients are included." The situation in beef cows and lactating ewes is similar.

However, David points out that the negative effects of high potassium levels can be offset by increasing sodium intake. Extra sodium in the diet helps improve magnesium absorption from the rumen. This is where a grass mineral analysis can be helpful in order to determine the risk posed by high potash levels, and appropriate action taken.

"For the first six weeks post turnout it's crucial that your magnesium supplement includes extra sodium. It is for this reason that Supalyx Magnesium contains 6% sodium (equivalent to 15.5% salt), as well as 15% highly available magnesium," he explains.

"Suckler cows with calves at foot or calving at grass are particularly at risk this spring because in most situations they do not receive any additional feed. Many cows may also be coming out of the winter period in poor body condition, simply because economics dictate they go through winter on a high forage only system. The combination of last year's high quality end of year grazing and a housed winter on average quality conserved forage in many cases means that cows are ill-prepared nutritionally for the key grass staggers risk period."

The same applies to mature ewes rearing twins are under significant nutritional stress, where feeding has ceased due to rapid grass growth.

For sheep and cattle Supalyx Magnesium is recommended, and where cattle are grazed without sheep the extra palatable Maxx Cattle Magnesium (containing copper) is ideal for this crucial period.

