

Crop Guide – Lucerne

PLEASE REMEMBER TO ALWAYS READ THE LABEL BEFORE USING ANY CHEMICAL

Lucerne needs to be planted on the best soils on the farm. ie. Deep well drained soils. It won't persist if planted on soils < 1m and it will quickly die out if it gets waterlogged. Lucerne does not like "wet feet."

Lime

Lucerne loves a sweet soil with lots of calcium. Therefore, almost regardless of soil pH, I always recommend lime and even possibly gypsum to be incorporated into the soil before planting. I won't apply lime to soils with a pH > 7.0. The amount of lime to be applied will depend on soil analysis, but less on sandier soils and more on heavier soils. I would be quite happy to say that 2-3 tons lime is probably what is required. The gypsum will help in taking some of the Ca & Mg down the soil profile where the plant will benefit from it.

Phosphate

Since Lucerne has a deep root system, its surface feeder roots (0-20cm) are not as densely populated as say maize or grasses. Therefore, also being a legume, it has a high P requirement. The soil P tests should be > 30 ppm (Brey 1) or more. Therefore, because it is a strong perennial crop that should last > 5 years, you only really get one good shot to get the P incorporated into the 0-20 cm zone. Therefore, I often recommend that 250 – 300 kg/ ha of MAP or 300 kg/ha 6.28.23 is broadcast out and disced in.

Potassium

As with P, Lucerne requires high levels of K and removes +/- 7 kg K₂O per ton hay removed. Also, to allow the lucerne plants to compete aggressively against the invasive grasses that do eventually smother the Lucerne, high levels of K also need to be applied before planting. I suggest applying 200 – 300 kg/ha KCL and disc in. Or the blend mentioned above could also do.

At Planting

Immediately after planting, spray the seed bed with KYNOPOP at 10 kg/ha. Will boost germination.

Maintenance

After every harvest or every 2nd harvest it is a good idea to top dress the Lucerne with 50 kg MAP+ 50 kg KCL or 100 kg Supers+ 50 kg KCL. You can use either the Veggie Oemff Fruit or the Soya Oemmf as foliar sprays as well. Apply at 4-5 kg/ha.

Foliar Sprays

Lucerne loves Boron and Molybdenum. You can use either the Veggie Oemff Fruit or the Soya Oemf as foliar sprays as well. Apply at 4-5 kg/ha.