**Liming - Frequently asked questions**

*By Mark Plunkett & Stan Lalor, Teagasc, Johnstown Castle*

The weather conditions last autumn have facilitated the application of ground limestone to both grassland and tillage soils. Liming Irish soils is very beneficial as our soils tend to be naturally acidic and requires regular lime application to maintain their productive capacity. Maintaining soils at the correct soil pH will increase the release of soil N and improve the availability of soil P and K following application.

The following is a series of questions in relation to lime and managing soils that have been recently limed.

Q1. Are there different types of limestone used for making ground limestone?

A. Yes, there are two types of ground limestone – Calcium (Ca) and Magnesium (Mg) limestone. Where soils are low in Mg apply magnesium limestone. There are also a range of granulated limes on the market which are based on either calcium or magnesium limestone depending on the product.

Q2. How much should I apply?

A. A recent soil report will show the rate of lime required depending on the soil type, soil pH and crop type.

Q3. How long will it take lime to work?

A. The fine lime will work relatively fast, and the course lime particles will react more slowly and help maintain soil pH for a number of years.

Q4. What is the maximum rate of lime in a single application?

A. Apply a maximum of 7.5t/ha (3.0t/ac). Where more lime is recommended apply the balance after 2 years.

Q5. Can slurry and lime be applied at the same time?

A. Firstly, applied lime can increase the loss of N to the air after slurry application. If slurry is first applied leave a week before spreading lime. If lime has been applied avoid slurry application for 3 months.

Q6. How long should one leave between liming and applying urea?

A. The N in urea and cattle slurry are in the same form. Therefore, treat urea the same as cattle slurry as described above in question 5.

Q7. How long should one leave between spreading 18-6-12 or CAN and lime?

A. There is no need to leave a gap with CAN or N P K compounds.

Q8. What is the target pH for grassland where my land is in a high molybdenum (Mo) area?

A. Maintain a soil pH 6.2 on these soils.

Q9. Will recently limed tillage soils be more prone to manganese (Mn) deficiency?

A. Recently limed tillage soils are more prone to Mn deficiency. To reduce the potential for Mn deficiencies ensure lime is well incorporated during soil cultivations and seedbeds are well consolidated after sowing.

Q10. When is the best time to apply lime to silage swards?

A. Generally, lime can be applied at any time of the year, provided the grass sward is low to avoid excess lime sticking to herbage. For silage it is better to lime after cutting, as high uptake of lime can increase the pH in the silage pit which affects silage preservation.