

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

**NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA**

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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## **Innovative technique examines environmental impact of fertiliser run-off on dairy pastures**

An innovative method is being used to assess the environmental impact of phosphorus fertiliser run-off on dairy pastures.

Dr Lucy Burkitt, research fellow at the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research's (TIAR) Dairy Centre, is looking at the concentration of phosphorus run-off various fertiliser application strategies may produce using a small-scale rainfall simulation technique.

Based at TIAR's Cuthbertson Laboratories at the UTAS Cradle Coast campus, more than 100 boxes of farm soil have been brought in to the site's greenhouse where the simulation is taking place.

The research project is aiming to enhance the efficiency of fertiliser use to help further protect valuable soil and water resources, and provide greater productivity outcomes for dairy pastures.

"Fertiliser application strategies can vary, although many farmers are applying small rates of fertiliser more often," Dr Burkitt said.

"The project, using the small-scale rainfall simulation technique, is measuring the risk of run-off various application methods may produce."

Dr Burkitt said research has shown loss of phosphorus fertiliser through run-off can pose a serious threat to water quality.

"Good water quality is important to the whole community and it is essential that the dairy industry does everything it can to protect our valuable water resources," she said.

The research project concludes this month, with results presented to farmers and industry early next year.

Dr Burkitt's research is building on findings from previous research in Australia. The project is in collaboration with Dr Warwick Dougherty, Research Scientist with the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries, who is also conducting complementary studies in the laboratory that will further examine the effect of soil properties on run-off.

***For more information/interviews contact:***

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