

Beat the Fertilizer Problem By Testing Your Soil First

Testing the soil before planting is especially important in 1974 to help beat the fertilizer problem and improve energy management.

"Farmers who test the soil to determine the nutrient level will avoid wasting fertilizer and save money," said Harold Owens, U.S. Department of Agriculture Extension Service agronomist.

Testing takes the "guess work" out of the amount of

nutrients available in the soil for future crops. It indicates the exact quantity of fertilizer elements necessary for a specific crop yield goal for 1974. Soil tests help farmers adjust fertilization rates to conserve and make efficient use of the fertilizers available.

Fields vary considerably in chemical composition or plant nutrient content. Lawns, gardens, golf courses and all lands to be fertilized should be tested, Owens said.

Farmers may find their soil's nutrient level has changed and this may reduce the rate needed of specific nutrients. To illustrate, a summary of Ohio soil tests over a 10-year

period showed an average increase from 18 to 35 pounds per acre for phosphorus, calling for a reduction in phosphate fertilizer applications.

Extension Service offered this guidance on soil testing:

In general, soil should be tested every three years. If you have had your fields tested within the past three years, you may update your lime and fertilizer recommendations for the next crop by using the previous soil tests and adjusting for plant nutrients removed or added. For intensive cropping systems requiring heavy fertilizer treatments, you may want to test the soil each year.

While a soil sample may be taken almost any time, it is best to take the sample when the soil is not too wet nor too dry but in good plowing condition. Testing should be done early enough to allow time for testing and getting the report and recommendations back from the laboratory before planting time. This can take from one to four weeks, depending on the backlog of samples and condition of the soil samples. Check with your county Extension agent for instructions on taking soil

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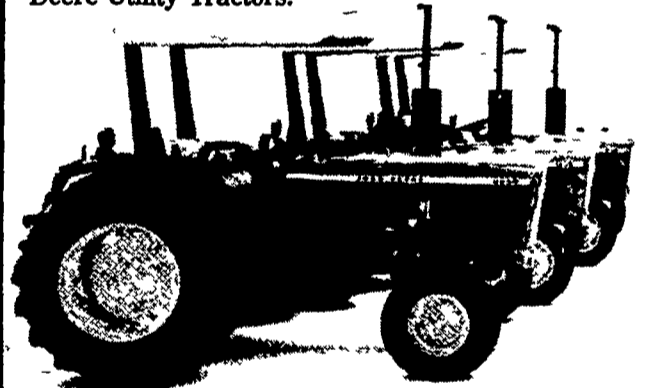
was selected out of 110 bull entries. Shown with the champion are from left Erskine Cash, PSU; Penny Nash, Miss Charolais USA; Debra Bauman, Rocky Mountain Charolais Queen; Gail Long, judge; Howard Johnson, AICA president, Kansas City, Mo.; Logan Dickerson; Herman Purdy and Less Haller.

samples for testing and the address of available public and commercial soil testing laboratories.

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