



Brockett's Ag Advice

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Now is a good time to test your fields. There is generally enough moisture in the ground at this time of the year to make soil sampling fairly easy. Corn silage is harvested. Hay crop fields are going or are already dormant. Fall grains and/or cover crops are planted and up. Finally there is still time to apply lime before winter freeze up in most of the state. Even though soil testing has increased in cost in the past few years, it is still one of the great bargains you have as a farmer. Good use of a soil testing program can save you more fertilizer dollars than it will ever cost for the testing.

While you are out there collecting those samples, check out the weed situation so you can do a better job of pinpointing your weed control needs for next year. Jot the weed problem down on the side of your sample bag or carry a pocket notebook with you to write down observations.

LIME

Lime is the "great equalizer." It can correct a lot of management mistakes by making weed control materials more effective, releasing soil nutrients, and providing nutrients of its own. Recently, I read a brief report by PSU Agronomist Doug Beegle in the "Agronomy Gleanings" about lime. The main purpose of his report was to discuss the importance of lime quality and the

establishment of uniform liming material specs. There is nothing earthshattering in the report and there is nothing in it you can not read elsewhere. However, it is a good synopsis on lime and might be something you could use as a farmer to get a better understanding on the use of lime. If you are interested in reading it, I'm sure your county agent would be happy to give you a copy of the report.

Using Manure

There is a new ST 10 out. Those of you who regularly soil test have probably made extensive use of the old ST 10. There are some revised tables on the value of manure in this leaflet. Of particular interest would be the rapid loss of nitrogen if manure is left on the ground for various periods of time before incorporation. For example, did you realize that manure applied to the ground then incorporated a mere four days later loses about half of its available nitrogen? That means that for an average 20-ton application of cow manure the loss would be 40 pounds of nitrogen per acre. If nitrogen was worth 15 cents per pound, that would be a \$6 loss per acre.

You should make use of the tables from the ST 10 when you are calculating fertilizer needs from your soil test reports. It only makes good economic sense to not spend money on fertilizer you do not need. In addition, excessive use

of fertilizer and/or manure can cause water pollution, including your own wells and streams.

If you would like more accurate manure values for your own manure you can get a manure test kit from your county agent.

Crop Records

While we are on agronomy and crops, do not forget to keep some crop records. Records of the

amount of manure applied to a particular field could help you do a more uniform job of spreading manure nutrients in the future. In addition, those records can provide you with a history of the requirements and performance of your fields. Crop and field records can help you make rotation decisions, weed control decisions, crop type and even variety

decisions, and be valuable if you are interested in an accurate "Farm Analysis." I usually take for granted that anyone who reads my column and wants to improve spendable income is also interested in a usable "Farm Analysis."

It is easiest to keep the crop records if you are in a Crop
(Turn to Page D17)

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