West Virginia Pasture Management

Soil Management with Soil Test Results


What

Providing proper management to particular soils to make the most efficient use of management resources by using soil test results is an important management tool.

Caution

Remember that your test results are only as accurate as the sample and information that you send to the laboratory.

1. Be sure you collect "representative" samples of your fields.
2. Be sure your sample is dry before you send it. Do not dry your sample in an oven. This will cause the analysis to be inaccurate.
3. Identify your sample so that you know what field it came from.
4. Report the amount of legumes accurately. If in doubt about whether there is more or less than 30 percent legumes, use the less than 30 percent option.

Why

Soil test results will provide the following information:

1. pH level
2. Phosphorus level
3. Potash level
4. Calcium level
5. Magnesium level
6. Lime requirement level
7. Type of material to correct deficiencies
8. Amount of material to correct deficiencies

What

1. pH - a measure of the acidity in the soil. Minimum target level for pastures is 6.2. Use lime to raise pH.
2. P - pounds of available phosphorus per acre. Minimum target level for pastures is 50 lbs./acre. Use any fertilizer containing phosphorus to raise P. Usually 0-46-0 (triple super phosphate) is used if P is the only plant food that is deficient.
4. Ca - pounds of available calcium per acre. Minimum target level is 3,000 lbs. per acre. Use lime to raise Ca level.
5. Mg - pounds of available magnesium per acre. Minimum target level is 200 lbs. per acre. Applying dolomitic lime is the best way to raise Mg levels.
6. L.R. - lime requirement in terms of tons of lime per acre needed to raise the pH level to 6.5. Target level is "0" tons per acre.
7. Types and amounts of material needed to correct deficiencies.
   a. tons per acre of lime needed
   b. pounds per acre of actual nitrogen plant food
   c. pounds per acre of actual phosphorous plant food
   d. pounds per acre of actual potash plant food

**Importance**

Soil test results can save thousands of dollars by helping us make proper soil fertility management decisions.

1. By helping us to know whether we even need soil amendments.
2. By helping us to select the right type of material.
3. By helping us to use the correct amount of materials.

**Where**

Soil sample kits are usually available at the local WVU Extension Office, SCS Office or A.S.C.S. Office. Results will be mailed to your home address.

**Summary**

An understanding of soil test results is important for management planning. Proper use of soil test results will enable you to make decisions about the type and quantity of material needed which can literally save you money. Understanding your results can also help you with long range plans of action.

**Where to Get Help**

For more information on soil test results, contact your local office of the Soil Conservation Service or the West Virginia University Extension Service. They are listed in the telephone directory under "U.S. Government" and "West Virginia," respectively.

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