

Soil Testing for Winter Crops

With harvest finished and the majority of the summer crop sown, it is time to start thinking about soil testing. Soil testing is an important tool to enable farmers and agronomists to formulate a fertiliser program. Soil tests help determine whether the soil is deficient, moderate, adequate or toxic in a range of nutrients. A soil test will also give an indication of soil structural properties, influenced by soil chemistry.

The most important factor in soil testing is sampling. It is important that the sample taken is from an area of the paddock that is representative of the whole paddock. It is also important that samples are taken from only one soil type. For paddocks with more than one soil type it is better to take the sample from the soil type, which takes up the greater percentage of the paddock. If they are equal it may be worth doing more than one test.

The larger number of samples taken per test the more accurate the results. Twenty samples should be taken for shallow soil tests and eight samples for deep tests. All testing equipment should be clean and free of soil residue from previous soil testing.

Once collected, the sample should be kept cool and dispatched to a Pursehouse Rural branch as soon as possible. If it is necessary to store the sample, this can be done in a refrigerator or freezer, or the sample can be air-dried.

Pursehouse Rural uses Nutrient Advantage laboratory to analyze their soil tests. The lab is a member of ASPAC (Australasian Soil & Plant Analysis Council), and the laboratory is registered with NATA (The National Authority for Accreditation of Laboratories conducting tests, calibrations and measurements) so growers can be certain of receiving reliable results.

All soil test results are processed by a Pursehouse Rural agronomist using the Nutrient Advantage software. All Pursehouse Rural agronomists are accredited with Nutrient Advantage and have a great deal of local knowledge.

Any one interested in doing soil tests for the upcoming winter crop, or any incrop test for summer crops, should contact their local Pursehouse Rural agronomist who will be happy to take soil samples on your property.

Harvesting of Winter Crops 2006

The harvest is over and rain would be welcomed with open arms. The yields have been variable for this winter crop due to a dry season and a hot spring. Yields have ranged between 1 t/ha to 5 t/ha on dryland and up to 6t/ha on timely irrigated paddocks. The long season wheat and barley planted early in May were higher yielding than later planted crops. There was some barley suitable for the malting market which paid up to \$360/tonne. The weight was down in the barley but most of the wheat was weighing well over 80 kg/hl as a test weight. The canola yields were back from last year but oil % tended to be higher. The drought has kept grain prices relatively high because of the lack of grain. Chickpeas yielded well and with high prices up to \$640/tonne it was a very viable option this year. Fababean yields were back this year but the price was \$300/tonne which was \$100/tonne more than 12 months ago. Winter wheats performed well this year because of the early plant they capitalized on the rain in early June.

Heavy winds in November caused some major shattering of some bread wheat varieties. Durum wheat stood up to the shattering the best.

Summer Crop 2006 - 2007

The sorghum that has been planted, desperately needs rain to ensure good development of secondary roots. There are a lot of crops that are growing mainly on the primary root. Only a few select crops have been sprayed for broadleaf weeds. Talk to your local Pursehouse Rural agronomist for the correct information.

Very little corn was planted in the Gunnedah district. Some early crops planted in September are starting to tassle. Rain would be beneficial to the final yield of these crops.

More sorghum would be planted if timely rain fell before the end of January. Mungbeans may be an option as well.

Preventing Theft of Anhydrous Ammonia

Watch for Warning Signs

Farmers, dealers and all who are concerned about the theft of anhydrous ammonia for the manufacture of illegal drugs should watch for the following: -

- Partially opened tank valves and/or leaking tanks;
- Common items associated with and often left behind after theft including buckets, coolers, duct tape, garden hoses and bicycle inner tubes;
- The presence of unfamiliar or suspicious-looking individuals during daylight hours (thieves often check out the property beforehand);
- The sure signs of meth labs, including strong doors, blacked-out windows (to obstruct observation) and large amounts of trash.

Preventing Theft by Working Together

Protecting anhydrous ammonia for its intended beneficial use as a fertiliser is to everyone's benefit. By following the guidelines contained in this article, you can ensure anhydrous ammonia continues to be a valuable source of nitrogen. Incitec Pivot is being proactive and cooperating with Federal and local law enforcement officials in efforts to keep ammonia in the right hands.

Steps to Prevent Theft

The proper storage of anhydrous ammonia is important for your safety and to help prevent the manufacture of methamphetamine. Here are some measures that you can take to prevent theft at your farm: -

- Have tanks as close to application as possible and immediately return them when you are done with them.
- Consider purchase of locking devices for nurse tank valves when

you obtain your nurse tank.

- Ensure tanks are placed in well lit and secure areas. Consider installing motion detector lights or alarms to deter suspicious activities around sheds and farmstead. If possible, place tanks where they can be seen from the residence and where the flow valves face either the drive lane or residence. This will make it easier to spot individuals who may be near the tank.
- Bleed hoses at the end of the day to remove excess liquid and lock hose end valves to prevent use of them to access and steal anhydrous ammonia from the tank.
- Check tanks frequently since unattended tanks are often targeted. If possible, conduct these checks over weekends also.
- Block road lanes or entrances near the tank with a gate or barricade to complicate theft of the entire tank. Having "No Trespassing" signs posted on these gates or driveway posts will further protect you in a legal case.
- All tanks should be labelled with caution labels to warn others of the highly hazardous nature of anhydrous ammonia.
- Place brightly coloured plastic wire ties or seals between the valve wheel and the roll cage to facilitate quick visual checks. If the tie or seal has been broken, it is likely that someone has tampered with your tank.
- If you discover someone near your tank who should not be there, do not confront the individual directly. Users of methamphetamine may become violent with little provocation. Call your local police or law enforcement agency.
- Contact local law enforcement or local drug force personnel to help identify security measures and encourage night-time patrols of your area.

Besides the threat of immediate health and environmental hazards, a third risk from anhydrous ammonia theft is liability to the farmer. Because anhydrous ammonia is a known hazardous substance and creates a dangerous condition, farmers could be liable for the harm to any farm visitor, including the trespassing thief. This liability can be reduced if the farmer can document that reasonable precautions have been taken to secure the chemical and that signs warning of dangerous conditions have been posted.

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December Weather Summary

visit http://www.pursehouserural.com.au/services/weather_station.html

Location	Average Temp (°C)	High Temp (°C)	Low Temp (°C)	Number of Days > 35°C	Rain mm	Average Wind Speed Km/h	High Wind Speed Km/h	Dominant Wind Direction
Cattle Lane, Willow Tree	22.0	36.0	8.7	3	12.0	13.4	64.4	SSE
"Murlow", Quirindi	Due to technical problems data for this weather station has not been recorded this month							
"Dow Site", Breeza	23.6	35.8	11.9	5	14.4	10.1	61.2	SSE

Data recorded to 9.00pm 22 December 2006