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10-16-14

To: Rains County Leader

From: Stephen Gowin  
CEA-Agriculture  
Rains County

RE: News Article

In the last three days we have received seven or eight phone calls requesting soil test kits and information about soil testing. Ideally forage and crop producers need to have the soil tested in late October thru December. This way if you need lime, you will have plenty of time to apply the lime. Soil pH is extremely important in crop production.

Most forage crops grow best at pH levels between 5.8 and 6.5. Lime moves very slow through the soil profile. Therefore, it should be applied in a timely fashion for it to react to the season of the crop you are growing. It generally takes lime about three to six months to change the pH levels in the soil. This means that hay producers need to have lime applied by the end of January to first of February.

For forage and crop production fertilization management is necessary for optimum production. However, with the increasing cost of fertilizer producers need to make some management decisions which could help keep fertilizer cost at a minimum. The key step to hay and crop production management is a soil test. Soil testing will provide the producer with fertilizer and lime recommendations. If you simple throw out fertilizer at 300 lbs. per acre then we may be adding too much or not enough nutrients needed to produce quality forage. Soil

testing can be a cost saving practice. Typically we will recommend soil test on hay meadows and pastures every 2-3 years.

Limestone should be evaluated based on its Effective Calcium Carbonate Equivalence or ECCE value. A higher ECCE number indicates a better quality limestone that will have a quicker neutralizing effect and may prove to be a better value compared to lower quality limestone. Consider the following calculations for a 1-ton ECCE limestone application recommendation:

Limestone #1 – ECCE value of 65 @ \$40.00/ton applied 1ton required/ .65 = 1.54 tons needed  $1.54 \times \$40.00 = \$61.60/\text{acre}$

Limestone # 2 ECCE value of 98 @ \$55.00/ton applied 1 ton required/.98 = 1.02 tons,  $1.02 \text{ tons} \times \$55.00 = \$56.10/\text{acre}$ .

For more information on pasture management or soil testing please give me a call and I will be glad to help you. Soil testing kits for the Texas A&M Soil Testing Lab and Stephen F. Austin Soil Testing Lab are available through our office. If you need a testing kit, just give us a call and we will send you one.