



Agri-Doo Nutrient Management Services

Common errors in managing nutrients.

Fertilizer must always be used.

Soil grows plants not fertilizer. We use fertiliser to correct soil deficiencies.

Fertilizing without getting the soil analysed.

This may seem incredible, but even today there are farmers who choose fertilizers without knowing the nutrient status of their soil. Their chances of achieving optimum productivity are low.

The same fertilizer rate every year.

Many things can affect the rate of nutrient draw down from soil and nutrients can be deposited from a number of sources. This will affect the required fertiliser requirement for a particular paddock. Factors such as hay making, hay feed out, effluent use, drought and flood, pasture consumption, cropping, cow time and plant type can have dramatic impacts.

Testing is not worth it.

It is rare that a paddock is in perfect condition. Many paddocks are deficient or excess in nutrients and testing will reveal that. An increase in production or a reduction in fertilizer use will pay for the tests many times over. Testing can also aid in nutrient correction that may reduce animal disease and increase animal fertility.

Using the wrong soil laboratory.

All laboratories are not the same. Some use methods that are not properly calibrated, therefore the results do not really reflect the soil nutrient status.

Others do not have proper quality control systems in place. Remember, a bad analysis can be worse than no analysis. In Australia NATA accreditation ensures the highest standards of testing.

Incorrect soil sampling.

A bad soil sample gives incorrect results no matter how good the laboratory is.

Correct soil sampling technique is important and hand sampling is more accurate than mechanical based sampling.

Concentrating on the major nutrients.

The terms macro, secondary and micro nutrients are misleading. All of the nutrients are equally important; a deficiency in any one can dramatically reduce growth. Farmers who are only interested in N, P and K fertilizers are probably not achieving optimum production.

Curing deficiencies rather than preventing them.

Some farmers and advisors will only tackle a nutrient deficiency when it is detected by tissue analysis or visual symptoms. Of course if a deficiency is detected in soil, you should attempt to correct it. However, at that stage, the soil has already been affected and you cannot obtain maximum growth.

It is far better to use soil analysis to predict and prevent nutrient problems rather than to wait for lost production.

Depending on visual symptoms.

“A deficiency is not a deficiency unless I can see the symptoms”. This approach is used especially in managing secondary and micro nutrients. In the majority of field cases, nutrient deficiencies can reduce plant growth without showing any clear symptoms. This is often called “hidden hunger”.

Assuming that good fertilization guarantees high yield.

You may have a perfect fertilization program, but if there are other problems in the field, you will not achieve top yields. Unhealthy planting material, water stress, pests, diseases and weeds are just some of the factors that can limit plant growth on even the most fertile soil.

Following the soil report blindly.

Soil laboratories give fertilizer SUGGESTIONS for the plant you wish to grow.

These suggestions must be modified to suit your actual conditions. The lab does not know the cost of your fertilizers, the potential productivity of your environment, the value of your plant nor your financial position. It therefore cannot determine the most economical fertilizer application rates.

“Magic” products.

It is not uncommon to see new products being offered to farmers which promise big yield increases while reducing input levels of standard products.

These products usually claim to be "scientifically proven" to stimulate soil nutrient release and increase plant uptake. Scepticism of "magic" products is certainly warranted and if tried at all it should be done on a very small scale to determine its' value. Such products should normally be supplied free of cost for small scale trials.

Misguided soil report interpretation.

The provider and advisor should be different people or organisations. Sometimes information is given that benefits the fertiliser provider rather than the farmer, sometimes the advisor does not have adequate knowledge to advise.

Effluent application without testing

Effluent is incredibly high in many nutrients and over application can lead to a number of complications (such as weeds, soil degradation, animal health issues and nutrient leaching). Have some idea of suitable application rates before application.