

POLK COUNTY GRAZIER

An eNewsletter brought to you by the Rich Mountain Conservation District



Soil Testing for Pasture Management

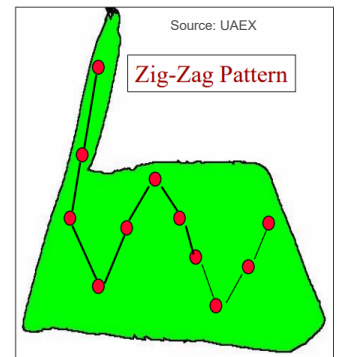
Maintaining good soil fertility is an important part of managing pastures. Fertilization can increase forage yields and forage quality and decrease weed pressure and soil erosion. It has been estimated that 90% or more of the soil nutrients available in a well managed pasture are recycled back into the soil; but through time some nutrients are lost and may need replenished.

Soil testing is a very important practice to inform the manager what's in the soil and what it needs to be most productive. Soil testing is also beneficial by letting us know what nutrients are not needed so we do not waste money buying fertilizer that the soil does not need. Applying nutrients according to a recent soil test also helps to protect water quality.

Soil tests are free to residents of Arkansas so there is no reason not to have your soils tested. But soil test results are only as good as the person collecting the samples so care must be taken to get the most accurate results.

Here are some general guidelines to get the most accurate soil test results:

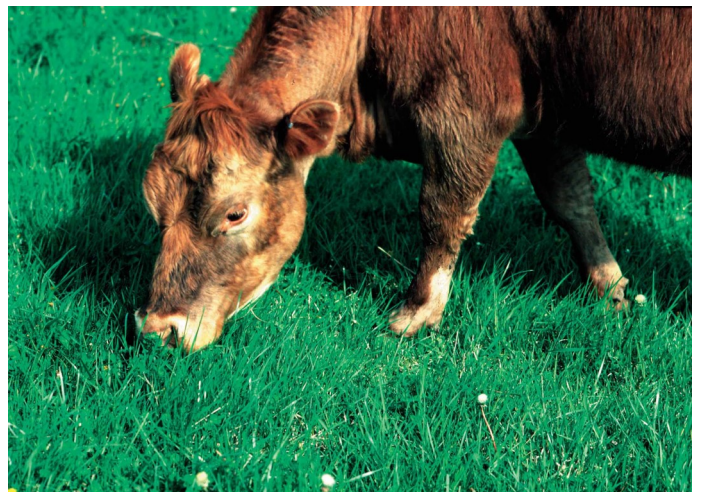
- ⇒ Collect soil samples every 3-5 years with fall usually being the preferred time of year. Sample results can vary slightly throughout the year due to changes in temperatures and rainfall so it's best to sample during the same time of year each time so results can be compared.
- ⇒ Each subsample of soil should be taken to a depth of 4 inches with rocks, roots, or any other organic matter removed. Soil can be collected with a shovel, post hole diggers, or a soil probe/auger specially designed for taking a core.
- ⇒ Collect several subsamples in a zig-zag pattern throughout each field to get a more accurate average for the field. The number of subsamples needed depends on the size of the field and variability in the field's features such as terrain. The more subsamples the more accurate the average will be for that field so plan on at least 5 subsamples per field. For fields larger than 10 acres, take an additional subsample for each 5 acres above 10 acres. For example, a 40 acre field should typically have at least 11 subsamples minimum.
- ⇒ The subsamples should be completely mixed together in a bucket, allowed to dry, and then a pint to a quart of that mixture removed and put in a bag labeled for that field. Label each sample so that you know which field it came from and make note of the field size and the type of forage in the field.
- ⇒ Take the sample to the local U of A Extension Office and they will mail it to the soil testing laboratory. Results are usually obtained in a few weeks but tend to take longer in the spring due to back log.
- ⇒ If you are not comfortable taking your own soil samples please contact Jessica Beck at the Rich Mountain Conservation District (479)437-6049. She can collect the samples and write you a Nutrient Management Plan.



Next newsletter will focus on understanding a soil test report.

Upcoming Grazing Meetings and Seminars:

- ⇒ **JULY 20, 2021— Crabgrass Facts, Re-seeding and Grazing Management Demonstration**—You are invited to attend the weekly grazing training sessions by Jeremy Huff, the USDA/NRCS state grazing specialist. He offers these training sessions as a Zoom meeting and the instructions for logging in are included in attached flyer. If you have the Zoom app on your phone you can just scan the QR code on the flyer. If you want to see it on your computer there is a link included in the attachment. There are sessions normally every Tuesday at 1pm so [see the attached flyer](#).
- ⇒ **July 30-31, 2021— Arkansas Cattlemen's Association Annual Convention and Tradeshow**—at Hot Springs, AR. Click [here](#) for more information.
- ⇒ **August 12-14, 2021— Profitable Grazing & Stockmanship Conference**—at Claremore, OK. There is a \$250 fee for all three days. To register, go to [Eventbrite/profitablegrazing](#) or email the organizer at mrssarabullis@yahoo.com



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Did you Know?

- ⇒ Cattle normally defecate 10-12 times and urinate 6-8 times daily.