



COLLECTING A SOIL SAMPLE

Soil and plant tissue analyses highlight mineral imbalances that might be affecting the health of pasture or animals. Soil testing takes the guess work out of nutrient management and allows cost effective fertiliser programs to be produced. Plant tissue tests complement soil tests and allow important trace nutrients to be adjusted for improved animal health.

Materials needed:

- 150mm (6") soil probe (auger) is recommended
- Clean bucket for sampling
- Ziplock bags (1 per sample)
- Permanent marker pen

Note: The results you receive will only be as good as the samples you send in for analysis.

To keep your sample as representative of the field as possible avoid field gates, eroded hillsides, water troughs, urine patches, feed rings etc. Avoid taking a sample 3 months after solid fertiliser is applied.

Take 20 samples along a 60m (200 feet) transect. Take photos and GPS.

Scrape the top of the soil with the heel of your boot to remove grasses and organic matter. Or remove the top ½ cm from the sample.

If you are taking a biological sample these are often taken to different depths- check the lab request and collect into a different bucket from your mineral test.

Place all the samples together in a clean pail or other container, and mix thoroughly. Remove pebbles and other debris.

Place one cup of the mixed sample in a sealable plastic bag or other clean, unbreakable container.

Label the container clearly with your name, address, and phone number.

Fill in the lab form and send immediately to the lab. Record date sent and number of samples into your calendar.

Email lab to say # of samples are on their way.

If you have several distinctly different soil types or growing conditions, you may want to take separate soil samples from each of the locations, e.g. the hay fields, garden, limestone hills etc. We prefer to sample the best and worst areas on the same soil types, to look at how can we lift the worst to perform like the best?

Taking a reliable sample

Traces of chemicals (such as drench) on your hands or using homemade augers may contain zinc or iron which will contaminate test results. Try to avoid skin contact with the sample.

What is your goal? Soil tests are more valuable when collecting trends over time. It is therefore important to repeat soil tests the same time of the year in the same place.

Avoid sampling too big an area; you won't be able to replicate it. GPS measurements and/or photographs can be used to ensure that samples are taken from consistent sites.