

Southern Soils FERTILISER

A BALANCED APPROACH



Spring 2020 Newsletter

DON'T BE AFRAID TO GIVE UP THE GOOD, TO GO FOR THE GREAT – JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER

Peter Ham

It goes without saying that 2020 has been a year like no other. It would be very easy to say that we've had a great autumn, a very kind winter and now a promising spring, so let's just enjoy the back end of the season and the fruits it normally delivers. However, when considering the quote from John D. Rockefeller 'Don't be afraid to give up the good, to go for the great', we need to have a closer look at our thought process and really try and capitalize on spring potential, to put ourselves in a better position not only this year but in years to come.

As the days get longer and soil temperatures rise, we see an exponential increase in pasture growth rates, particularly on our improved pastures. It is fairly normal to manage this surplus growth through fodder conservation (silage/hay) or leave it standing in the paddock to be grazed over the summer/autumn period. However, sometimes we need to take extra steps to set ourselves up for the future.

Consider these following points:

- On average two thirds of our annual dry matter production occurs in a 3-month window over the spring period.
- Hay + Silage production removes significant amounts of nutrient from our soils which is rarely replaced in the short term.
- Grazing crops with livestock has minimal harvesting costs compared with fodder conservation or harvesting grain crops.
- You don't have to have prime lambs or steers to graze a fodder crop.
- Dry matter response to applied nutrient increases as our days get longer and soils warm up.
- Controlling annual weeds is far more effective in the spring time than autumn and winter as they are active and present in the sward.



Glendemar ewe with triplets grazing a mix of annual ryegrass and sub-clover. On top of the gypsum and compost this received prior to planting, this area received some additional nitrogen and a trace element mix as a foliar application at Shelburn, Shelford.

- You can effectively sow Perennial pastures in the spring time if preparation is adequate.
- Spring time is when you can more afford to take pastures out of production and renovate than autumn/winter when we are already pushed for feed.
- Hay and Grain prices are currently coming down rather than up.
- It is very difficult to go from a rundown weed infested paddock at the end of the season to sowing a productive pasture the following autumn without significant intervention.

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Assessing pasture composition year-round, rather than just in the growing season allows us to identify which paddocks are underperforming, particularly in the crucial autumn/winter period. Spring time then gives us the perfect time to act and start the improvement process. The reality is pastures that contain a high percentage of low value annuals, particularly barley grass, silver grass, onion grass and capeweed, don't grow the quantity or quality of pasture we require in our high value livestock systems. Terminating these pastures in the spring time whether its spray topping (hay freezing), to prevent seed set of annual grasses and maintain grazing palatability, completely spraying out, or even green/brown manuring into the soil is not a great loss to our spring feed.



The team inspecting a fodder crop in early December near Macarthur. This was a rundown pasture paddock which grew an excellent fodder crop and was sown back to high performing ryegrass and clover in the autumn.

If pushing down the summer cropping program, it provides an excellent opportunity to address soil limitations such as low soil pH, poor soil structure and nutrient deficiencies with applications of lime, dolomite, gypsum, compost and even capital applications of nutrients like phosphorus, potassium and trace elements. With increased soil temperatures comes increased biological activity and incorporating these amendments plus growing a broad mix of actively growing summer active species with big tap roots and soil building properties is an excellent way to set a paddock up for vastly improved production the following year.

Whilst there will be some challenges over the next six months, farming will always be part of the landscape and it's important to not get fixated on things that we can't control, like the weather and markets. Rather we should continue to focus on opportunities in the current landscape, such as a surplus of spring feed and an

opportunity to further our farming operation in both the short and long term. Remember, whilst spring is when we grow most of our grass, it is also the time that we can most afford to sacrifice some areas to improve dry matter production in the summer, or the following autumn/winter.

SOUTHERN SOILS SPRING SEED MIXES

Peter Ham



A spring fodder crop blend on its way out of the depot ready to be sown. This mix contains 10 varieties (oats to be added on farm), including clovers, lucerne, forage rape, turnip, radish, chicory and plantain.

Did you know Southern Soils recommends and supplies quality pasture seed mixes, for both autumn and spring sowing?

With increased interest in diverse, multispecies spring sown cover crop mixes both Dan and myself have been researching and skilling up so we can assist in delivering the best outcome for your spring program.

There is a lot of interest in herbs, sunflowers, buckwheat, summer active legumes, radish's, C4 grasses and the brassicas to name a few. We have clients looking to improve soil structure, bust through hard pans, attract beneficial insects and feed livestock on healthy diverse mixes.

If you're interested in expanding your horizons with your plantings this spring, feel free to call for a chat.

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PREPARING FOR A SPRING CROP – START WITH LIME

Dan Hill

As I write this article, it is currently 5.0 degrees outside, significantly warmer than the 0.5 degrees it feels, so the idea of preparing for the warmer months and sowing summer crops seems too distant to comprehend. However, its less than 5 months to Christmas and before we know it, we should be spraying out paddocks and preparing for spring sowing, remember 'timing is free' and preparation always pays.

As mentioned in previous newsletters; 'First and foremost, a summer crop program is the starting point for a pasture renovation, with the end goal always being to establish productive, persistent, pastures.'

Soil pH and soil fertility are a key component of a successful pasture renovation. It makes a lot of sense to be applying lime (in some cases dolomite) to address any soil pH and calcium/magnesium issues at the beginning of the renovation process not the end. It also makes sense to be doing any capital nutrient applications early on as well.

As a top dress application, the movement of both lime and dolomite is typically very slow, and can take several years to move through to the 10cm depth of your soil. Bearing this in mind, we could assume that we never fully address subsoil acidity with this practice. So, if our liming practices are maintaining a neutral pH from 0-10cm, but an acidic subsoil pH (stratification), many of the perennial pasture species we wish to plant will be negatively impacted by aluminium toxicity and nutrient tie ups, in the subsoil zone. Thankfully, there is something we can do to improve this situation.

Prior to planting the summer crop, cultivation is typically employed to prepare the seed bed, ensuring good soil to seed contact, as well as weed and pest disruption. This cultivation process presents another opportunity in-terms of incorporating soil ameliorants like lime and dolomite. This allows us to get the lime/dolomite into the soil much faster and to a greater depth, than our standard approach of top dressing over existing pastures.

It is important to note that care should be taken with the cultivation process, as we can do a lot of damage if we don't get it right. We want to avoid situations where it is too wet, and we get 'smearing' of the soil, and we also want to avoid over working the soil and ending up with 'bull dust'.

So, the first step is always soil testing to determine what the soil and subsequent crops require. If the soil is acidic, and issues like aluminium toxicity, cation imbalance or iron overload will impede either the summer crop or subsequent perennial pasture, it best to apply lime and/or dolomite prior to the summer crop cultivation, to achieve incorporation and activation. This creates a soil environment that is better suited to the establishment of perennial pastures, particularly the pH sensitive species like phalaris and clovers.

By changing the timing of the lime application to pre summer crop, or more specifically pre cultivation we can greatly improve the speed at which the lime activates and improves soil conditions, which ultimately leads to improved pasture performance and persistence.



Vickery Bros. team up with us to look after the spreading of your Lime.

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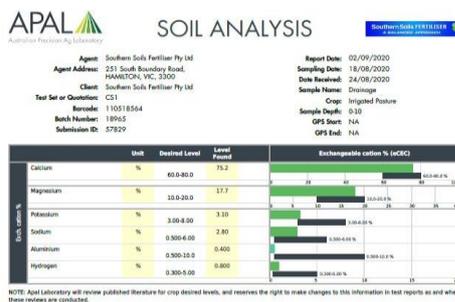
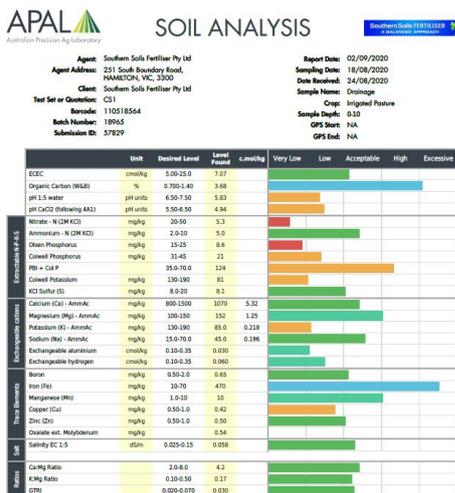
SPRING SOIL TESTING – 25% Off*

From the 1st October to the 10th December 2020, receive 25% Off when you have a *Minimum of 3 soil tests done.

Spring time soil testing assists in planning your Autumn Fertiliser.

With Spring allowing for rapid pasture growth, good soil moisture, nutrient availability and high levels of biological activity it is the ideal time for us to visit and collect your soil tests. These factors will allow for the soil tests to give you an accurate reading of your soils production capacity.

Once we have your soil test results, we have time to adjust plans and tailor programs to ensure you receive the maximum benefit of your soil investment.



COVID-19



Covid-19 has changed the way we have lived our lives the last few months, and will continue for some time yet. With the current Stage 3 restrictions (at the time of print), we are still operating but it does affect how we interact with our clients in order to follow the guidelines.

Customer contact does need to be limited in regards to face to face, and when required social distancing will be observed. Where possible please communicate via telephone or email.

Upon arrival at the depot we still encourage you to call or use UHF Channel 16 to arrange collection of your orders. And of course, please be wearing a mask at all times.

Stay safe.

SOUTHERN SOILS FERTILISER

Peter Ham 0429 448 653
peterham@southernsoils.com.au

Daniel Hill 0409 858 346
dan.hill@southernsoils.com.au

Tanya Lambert (Admin) 0409 427 963
tanya.lambert@southernsoils.com.au

1300 11 81 81

251 South Boundary Road (Po Box 565), Hamilton, Vic, 3300
admin@southernsoils.com.au | www.southernsoils.com.au

Southern Soils Fertiliser Pty Ltd

@SouthernSoils