

Fall Fertilization Offers Many Advantages

Fall application of fertilizer for next years crop is often an efficient nutrient management practice. Factors such as soil conditions, time management, and economics should be considered when determining fertilization timing. Fall application of phosphorus and potassium works well in many situations since these nutrients are of limited mobility in most soils. Applying lime in the fall is also a sound practice. There are many advantages to fall fertilization.

Fall fertilization saves valuable time in the spring season.

Fall application clears the way for quick spring planting and assures that lower than optimum fertility does not limit crop yield.

Fall fertilization spreads farmer and fertilizer supplier workloads over more months.

There may be a risk of late planting if too many tasks are attempted in the spring.

Fall fertilization reduces the probability of soil compaction.

In Indiana fields tend to be drier in the fall than in the spring. Dry soils are less susceptible to compaction from application equipment.

Fall fertilization allows more reaction time.

Fall application allows more time for lime to react with the soil. In reduced tillage systems more time is provided for nutrients to move into the root zone. In conventional tillage it allows application of fertilizer prior to primary tillage.

Soil testing is necessary in order to apply proper fall fertilizer and lime. Soil fertility planning based on soil testing to estimate residual nutrient levels, along with crop removal estimates, will not only move us closer to maintaining long-term soil fertility, but also help us achieve maximum production potential (Johnston, PPI 2002). We recommend soil testing every two to four years. GPS Soil testing according to soil type allows us to more accurately depict the nutrient levels in addition to applying variable rate fertilizer when needed.

To make plans for your fall soil testing and fertilizer program contact your local Andersons Farm Center.

Sources:

PPI Agri-Briefs Fall 2004, No. 6

PPI Fall Fertilization Facts 2001