

# GET THE LOW DOWN ON YOUR soil & plants

Testing soil will help you get the most out of your land. It removes the guess work by confirming the levels of essential nutrients, as well as the pH which relates to soil quality and uptake of nutrients by plants.

**THIS PROVIDES THE INFORMATION NEEDED TO WORK** out how to get the best 'bang for your buck' spend on fertiliser, as well as measuring changes in levels from season to season. Production level is one of the best indicators of the effectiveness of a fertiliser programme, providing climatic conditions are favourable.

## Testing soil for forage crops

Sampling soil before planting forage crops requires collection of 20 soil cores of 15cm, normally in a diagonal line across the paddock, combined to make a representative sample. For forage crops, order a Basic Soil Test + sulphate sulphur + available nitrogen, while for turnips or other brassica or beet crops, include 'boron' in the test request. Turnips are susceptible to boron deficiency which appears as multiple crowns and brown hearts.

## Testing pasture soil

For pasture soil tests collect 20 soil cores of 7.5cm soil cores in a diagonal line across the sample block. Be careful to avoid dung and urine patches and keep 10m away from shelter trees, fences and water troughs. Order a Basic Soil Test + sulphate sulphur. A wide range of additional tests, including Phosphate Retention (ASC) and Organic Sulphur, are available.

## Testing pasture leaf

Pasture analysis reports the levels of trace elements (Co, Se, Cu) essential for animal nutrition, and major elements (Ca, Mg, K) which are influenced by seasonal growing conditions and grazing management, not just the soil test level. Good nutrition of dairy cows during the period from calving through to mating, to avoid metabolic stress, is essential if peak lactation and good conception rates are to be achieved.

For monitoring of plant health, sample clover only for identification of any limiting nutrients. Similarly, crops such as maize, brassica and cereals should be sampled at the appropriate growth stage to monitor nutrient status. A Basic Plant Profile plus molybdenum is recommended.



TESTING SAMPLES AT THE HILL LABORATORIES



TAKING A SOIL SAMPLE ON FARM

Sampling pasture requires collecting at least 500g of pasture taken at grazing height. Avoid dung and urine patches, troughs, gateways and stock camps. Sample paddocks 'ready for grazing' midway between calving and mating.

Short grazing rotation in spring affects the pasture composition, resulting in cows eating pasture that has low calcium, high protein and high potassium levels which may be unfavourable for cow health. Order a Spring Pasture Profile from Hill Laboratories for a comprehensive test of the mineral content and key nutrient indices to help assess the risk of grass staggers, bloat and milk fever.

**Understanding your soil and plant content will ensure you apply the right fertiliser to maximise your land's potential. Contact Hill Laboratories today on 07 858 2000, for details on a wide range of tests to suit any soil or plant type.**