

## WHICH TEST IS RIGHT FOR ME?

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# VICKERY BROS.

## THE FERTILISER PROFESSIONALS

*"Granules of Knowledge"*

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With spring well and truly underway, many growers are starting to think about their soil and tissue testing programs. Each year, Vickery Bros does thousands of soil and tissue tests for clients, providing them with vital information about their soils, pastures and crops. In the 2022/2023 financial year, Vickery Bros sent a total of 2,210 tests to the Nutrient Advantage laboratory. Of those tests, 86% were 0-10cm soil tests, with only 5% being tissue tests. The information gained from these tests helped plan autumn fertiliser applications, paddock renovations, nitrogen decisions and silage / hay paddocks for the following year. So how do you decide what test you need to conduct? Do you need a soil test? Is a tissue test the better choice? In this article, I will explain the reasoning behind why we recommend different tests, the results you can gain from them and hopefully shed some light on which test is right for you this season.



### **Soil testing:**

Soil tests are the go-to option for most growers as they provide an objective measurement of most soil properties. There are four main reasons for conducting a soil test:

- **Predictive:** Conducted to assess nutrient levels and chemical constraints in the root zone.
- **Monitoring:** Testing in the same paddock that has been tested previously to assess trends in nutrient levels over time.
- **Diagnostic:** Reactive testing that aims to provide site specific data to explain a crop or pasture outcome.
- **Compliance:** Done to provide data to aid in environmental or human health risk compliance.

Once you know the reason for your soil tests this year, a plan can be made for which paddocks to test and the results you will need reported. Major nutrient levels, pH, salinity and soil structure constraints can all be assessed using the results of a soil test. This makes them a great option for determining if your soils may be limiting the growth potential of your pasture or crop. Different testing packages are available to test exactly what you are looking for in your soil. Liming rates, the use of gypsum and the amount of fertiliser required to lift the nutrient levels of your soil can all be calculated using the results of a soil test.

## Tissue testing:

Tissue tests are less common, but no less important when assessing pasture or crop health. The two main reasons tissue tests are taken are:

- Diagnostic: To determine the reason for poor plant growth.
- Monitoring: In order to assess the suitability of your current fertiliser management.

A tissue test is the best way to diagnose trace element deficiencies in your soil. With trace elements like copper, molybdenum and zinc being present in the soil in such small amounts, it can be difficult to accurately measure them on a soil test. Tissue testing in spring can also identify any deficiency in our major nutrients such as nitrogen or phosphorous. Clover can act as the canary in the coal mine in the cases of nutrient deficiency, and should be tested over grasses in a mixed sward. Tissue tests do not provide any direct information relating to soil pH or how much nutrient is required to increase the soil levels of our major nutrients.

## Blood testing:

If you suspect a serious animal health issue related to nutrient deficiency in your stock, you should contact your vet for a blood test. While soil and tissue tests can indicate low levels of nutrients for stock health, a blood test will be far more conclusive on the cause of an animal health issue. Copper, selenium, cobalt, iodine and zinc can all be tested for by your local vet. Usually 5 – 10 animals will need to be tested to get a full overview of mob health. Once a result has been returned and a diagnosis given, a treatment plan can be put in place on the advice of your vet. If a trace element deficiency in the soil has been determined, the addition of that nutrient to your next fertiliser application can be arranged.

# SOIL TESTING OFFER

## 15% DISCOUNT

### FOR THREE OR MORE SOIL TESTS

Vickery Bros will pass on a 15% discount that has been negotiated with the laboratory, when one customer conducts three or more soil tests.

**VICKERY BROS.**

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# WHAT'S ON AT MILTON TRIAL SITE



Clean Crop Leafy Turnip @ 4 kg/ha, sown on 11/9/23, picture 10/10/23

*This Spring we just have a few forage paddocks in to assess how the sheep perform across straight turnip, rape & raphno.*

*We also have a millet/sorghum/brassica trial to observe different varieties dry matter performance...*

*If your interested in how they perform feel free to come out and have a look anytime or contact your agronomist.*



Mainstar Rape @ 4 kg/ha, sowed on 11/9/23, picture 10/10/23



Pallaton Raphno @ 8 kg/ha, sowed on 11/9/23, picture 10/10/23



Millet/Sorghum/Brassica Variety Trial, sowed on 6/10/23, picture 10/10/23