

Forage Facts

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Seeding Season is Well Underway at PCBFA!

By: Jen Allen

The whole PCBFA crew has been hard at work getting ready for this year's seeding season. We spent the majority of May at the Research Farm doing prep work such as discing, harrowing, applying fertilizer, seed counting and weighing, seed drill calibration, and plot layout. After a few delays and hiccups along the way due to equipment issues, we were finally able to finish seeding all 899 plots at the Research Farm on June 1st. A special thanks to the MD of Fairview for letting us borrow the fertilizer applicator, and to GPRC Fairview for assistance with discing.

Next up we will be seeding our Valleyview and Rycroft plots, as well as doing work on our Pasture Rejuvenation Project at the Wanham PGR.



Prepping seed for Cocktail Mixture Trials



Fertilizer application



Our new & improved website is now live! Check it out at:
www.peacecountrybeef.ca



Plot seeding



All smiles after completing seeding at the Research Farm—go team!



We are looking forward to showing off our plots at our annual Field Day at the Research Farm. We have a lot of great things in store for this year's Field Day, so don't forget to mark your calendars and join us on July 19th at the Fairview Research Farm!

By: Jen Allen

It is no surprise that healthy soil is the foundation towards a healthy life for plants, animals, and humans. Soil sampling and testing is continuing to play an important role in monitoring soil health, as well as management practices related to fertility, cropping, and nutrients. Although taking soil samples may seem like a simple task, the soil test results may not be as accurate if your sampling technique is improper. In addition to soil sampling technique, the timing of sampling and sample preparation are also factors that can contribute to successful and accurate test results.

Technique

Soil variability has a large impact on soil sampling. Soil samples that are being sent in for testing analysis should be representative of the majority or average of the field or field portion in question. Therefore, it is important to have sufficient knowledge of the field in order to select a suitable location that will give a good overall representation of soil health information. Observable characteristics to assist with selection are things such as crop development, soil colour and/or landscape features. Furthermore, for all types of soil sampling techniques, it is suggested to take about 15-20 core samples per site. You also want to avoid areas that are dead/dying, back furrow, have old hay, straw or manure piles, waterways, saline areas, eroded knolls and old fence rows.

Random composite soil sampling is one common method for collecting soil samples and works best in fields that are uniform, have little variation and are less than 80 acres (Figure 1).

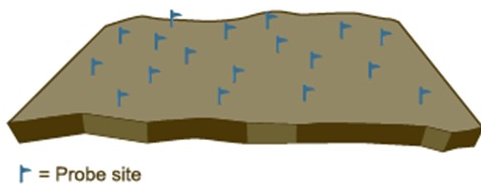


Figure 1. Random composite soil sampling.

Directed/managed random soil sampling is more appropriate for fields where it is more challenging to classify a single dominant area to represent the

majority of the field. For this sampling method, you will need to sub-divide the field into zones based on management practices and/or major characteristics. Then take 15-20 random core samples from each zone (Figure 2).

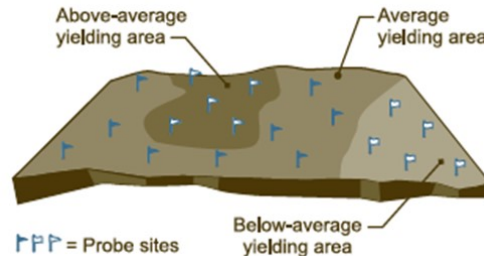


Figure 2. Directed/managed random soil sampling.

Benchmark sampling is another common method and works best for fields that have more variability, such as hills. For benchmark sampling, you want to choose an area of your field (approx. 30m x 30m) and perform all of the sampling within that area in a grid pattern. Again, you want to pick a main production area that has similar characteristics to the majority of the field (Figure 3).

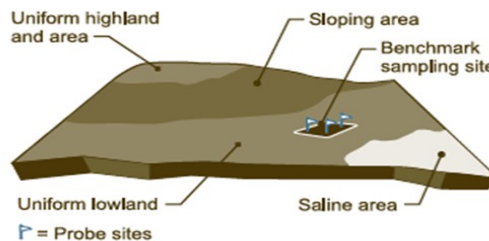


Figure 3. Benchmark sampling.

If you cannot identify a main area on your field, then you may select more than one benchmark site based on topography or other characteristics such as management, soil moisture, soil texture and/or slope. When multiple benchmark areas are needed, the soil sampling method is called directed benchmark sampling (Figure 4). To avoid inconsistency in your soil tests, the benchmark site(s) should be documented with a GPS or a marker so that you are able to return to the same spot to sample in the years to follow. Sampling from the same benchmark area(s) annually will provide you with the ability to observe changes in soil health over a duration of time.

...continued on page 3

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We are always looking for ideas! Give us a call!

PCBFA Member Perks

- Two Free Feed Tests/Year
- Ration Balancing Assistance
- Growing Forward 2 Assistance
- Environmental Farm Plans
- Scale & Tag Reader available for member use
- Soil & Livestock Water Quality Testing

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Methods for Successful Soil Testing

continued

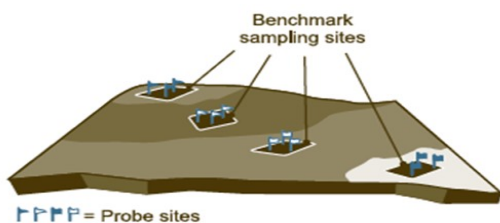


Figure 4. Directed benchmark sampling.

A soil sampling core tool (or sometimes called a soil probe) is the best tool to use to take the samples (PCBFA also has this tool available for rental use). For each of the 15-20 cores, take the samples at 0-6 inches depth (0-15cm) (surface soils). For improved nitrogen and sulfur evaluation or problem soils, additional samples at depths of 6-12 inches (15-30cm) and 12-18 inches (30-60cm) (sub-surface soils) should be taken at each site as well. Once cores are collected, you can mix core samples taken from the same depths together, just remember to label accordingly to avoid confusion.

Timing

According to Alberta Agriculture & Forestry, "cultivated fields for spring seeding should be sampled after October 1. These fields can also be sampled in the spring, but time may be limited then. Forage fields for seed, pasture or hay may be sampled after September 1. Fields for fall-seeded crops should be sampled one month before seeding. Problem soil areas may be sampled anytime. Frozen and water-logged soils should not be sampled because of the difficulty in obtaining a representative sample" (Alberta Ag & Forestry, 2004).

Preparation for Analysis

Soil tests can include results from both chemical and biological analysis. In order to get your sample ready to send into the lab, it needs to be air dried. Separate each core sample by depth, and simply spread the samples out on a paper plate, sheet, or shallow container/box and let air dry at room temperature. Samples may also be stored in the fridge for a few days, or in the freezer long-term.

As a PCBFA Member, you can send your soil samples to the lab directly through us! If you need any help with taking your soil samples or preparing them for analysis, just contact us!

(Alberta Ag & Forestry, 2004; AXIOM Agronomy Ltd., 2017)

Free Soil Sample Testing!

Did you know that with a PCBFA Membership, you are eligible to receive 1 free soil test a year? PCBFA staff are also available to go through the soil test results with you and provide recommendations if needed. Please feel free to contact us at any time for more information!



Warm Welcome to our Summer Research Technician Student, Anna Duke!



Hello everyone! My name is Anna, and I am very excited to be joining the PCBFA this summer as a Research Technician. I am currently working towards an undergraduate degree in Environmental and Conservation Science at the University of Alberta. I am majoring in Land Reclamation and hope to one day help restore impacted ecosystems within Alberta. I grew up in the Edmonton area and am very excited to experience all the Peace Country has to offer. I have always loved being outdoors and have a strong passion for animals. I am an avid equine enthusiast and currently entering my seventh year as a member of the Canadian Pony Club. Furthermore, I enjoy hiking and backpacking throughout the summer and spend much of the winter months skiing. Among these activities, I always try to find time to give back to my community and help in any way possible. I hope that working with PCBFA this summer will give me a new outlook on many areas of both agriculture and the environment. I am looking forward to the opportunities and skills I will gain as I take on this new job, and hope to meet many new faces along the way!



Upcoming Events

**Future Climate Scenarios in the
Peace River Region
Presentation**

June 14th
10:00am-11:30am

GPRC Campus
Fairview

**Jim Gerrish
1-Day Grazing School**

June 25th

Enilda

June 26th

Teepee Creek

Field Day at the Research Farm

July 19th

Fairview Research
Farm

**ACIDF Pasture Rejuvenation
Field Days**

August 23rd

Rycroft

August 24th

Grovedale

**Stockmanship School
with Dylan Biggs**

September 16th

Saddle Hills
County

New Zealand Ag Study Tour

Nov 23rd-Dec 12th
Final payment due Aug. 1st

New Zealand

**Western Canada Conference on
Soil Health & Grazing**

December 5th-7th
www.absoilgrazing.com

Radisson Hotel
Edmonton

For more information or to register for any of these great events, please visit our website or call the Fairview office at 780-835-6799 or email Jen at jen@pcbfa.ca

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