

Soil Testing for Acreages

As of December 31, 2017, the Soil and Plant Analysis at Iowa State University, closed to focus efforts internally, supporting soil science research by agronomy faculty. The following options are being provided to assist clients when choosing a lab.

Soil Testing for Acreages... row crops, small grains, hay, pasture, commercial horticulture. For these crops, clients should use soil testing labs that maintain certification through IDALS. Labs have to use specified testing procedures and prove reliability/consistency with test results. IDALS runs blind soil sample tests through these labs on a regular basis. This list can change a bit over time as labs may occasionally fail the blind tests but can return to the list with successful testing with IDALS next check. Go to: <http://www.iowaagriculture.gov/feedandfertilizer.asp> ; on the right side of the web site click on “Certified Soil Testing Laboratories”. FYI, also of interest on this website is the “Ag Limestone Quarry Certification Report” which provides ECCE values for those calculating lime applications using local limestone quarries.

Using “Certified Soil Testing Laboratories” is important so that soil test results from these labs can be interpreted based on extensive ISU research, and able to use the ISU publication PM-1688, “A General Guide for Crop Nutrient and Limestone Recommendations in Iowa” to interpret their soil test and make economically sound recommendations. <https://store.extension.iastate.edu/Product/A-General-Guide-for-Crop-Nutrient-and-Limestone-Recommendations-in-Iowa> This is a lengthy publication, but it would be nice to provide it to any farmer (landlord, consultant, etc.) planning on soil testing their crop and pasture acres. And if the client is new to soil testing, another critical publication to provide is “Take a Good Soil Sample to Help Make Good Fertilization Decisions”: <https://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/3915>

Regarding “Certified Labs”, ISU Extension office staff can suggest using labs from the certified soil testing labs list that offer the “Field-Moist” (or Wet) potassium (K) test since this test is preferred over the “Dry” K test (oven dried samples). The two labs mentioned below offer “Field-Moist” testing:

- Solum, Ames, IA: <http://solum.ag/> To use Solum, the client must call the lab and create an on-line account. Then they will have access to sample submission forms and other information.
- AgSource, Ellsworth, IA: <http://agsource.crinet.com/> AgSource has more than one testing lab in the mid-west, but the Ellsworth lab is the closest lab to northeast IA.
 1. AgSource Agronomy page <https://www.agsourcelaboratories.com/agronomy-agricultural-services>
 2. Basic sample submission sheet from AgSource, Ellsworth Testing Lab <https://www.agsourcelaboratories.com/Portals/11/Ellsworth/Ellsworth%20Soil%20Multiple%20Sample%20form.pdf>

Why use the “Field-Moist” K test versus the “Dry” K test?

1. Dr. Mallarino’s explanation of the benefits of Field Moist testing K: http://www.agronext.iastate.edu/soilfertility/info/Mallarino_2013%20Moist%20OK%20testing%20NCERA-13%20Workshop.pdf
2. Solum Lab’s shorter explanation of Dr. Mallarino’s work and the benefit of Field Moist testing K: <http://www.solum.ag/complete-soil-testing/field-moist-testing/>