

Which Soils to Sample

Livestock Area

In order to accurately identify mineral imbalances in the soil, it is important to sample fields on an individual basis. Rather like blood analysis for livestock, amalgamated samples will not provide the best diagnostic tool.

“Full Detail” soil mineral analysis is a significant investment which allows a management plan to be put forward over a 3 – 5 year period.

Select representative field which are important to the farm. It is useful to have a sample of the *best* and the *worst*. For example, within the typical grazing fields there may be a field with palatability problems, weed invasion or a poor level of production.

Another sample may represent silage ground or other forage conservation, where management might differ slightly. Again, focus on fields which illustrate any typical problems, sampling one representative field.

Arable Area

Fields which are in arable rotation follow similar guidelines. Select one or two representative fields with a focus on fields with similar soil type. Obviously, different soil types must be analysed separately, even if these fall within the same field boundary. If it is not commercially viable to improve a small area, ignore it.

Evaluating Progress

“Intermediate Testing” can be used to track soil improvements after 2-3 years. The time interval depends on soil type and problems. Less expensive, **“Forage mineral analysis”** may also be used to observe trends of improvement in the soil which ultimately benefit livestock health.

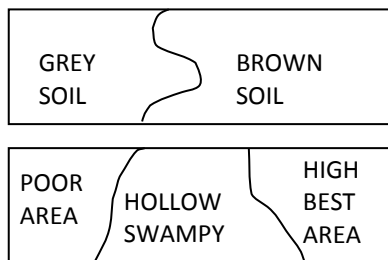
Taking Soil Samples

To obtain a representative soil sample acceptable for analysis, please follow the directions below:

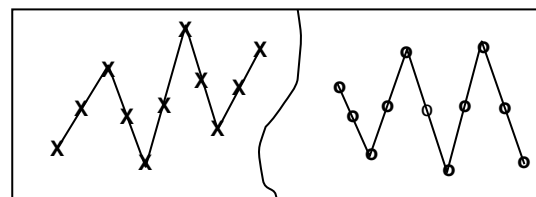
- Different soils (colour/texture/different fertiliser use and quantities/performance) should be sampled separately.
- **Each sample should represent not more than 10 hectares.** Larger areas should be subdivided and two or more samples sent.
- Soil should be taken from average growth spots or from the poorer spots where these are numerous. Avoid spots of very good growth. (Walk in a zigzag pattern).

- Avoid taking samples near gateways, fence lines, feeders, haystacks, lush growth caused by animal droppings and the bottom of gullies and areas where water may lie – if this is uncharacteristic.
- Soils should be taken from **at least 20 spots (per sample)**. At each spot clear the surface of weed growth or pasture etc. to bare the soil without removing any soil. In a cropped paddock take the samples from between the rows of crops or stubble.
- Take the sample with a **stainless steel or plastic tube sampler**. Depth of sample to be as follows:
 - 10cm in pasture land
 - 15cm in lucerne and cultivated land (market gardens and annual crops)
 - 30cm in orchard land in two depths (0-15cm and a sub soil analysis at 15-30cm).
- Mix the sub-samples thoroughly in a **clean plastic bucket** and fill the enclosed plastic bag or box to the level indicated (one bag/box per sample). Exclude as much air as possible from bags then seal and label each bag/box. **PLEASE NOTE FOR A “FULL DETAIL” ANALYSIS THE BOX MUST BE FULL OR THERE WILL NOT BE SUFFICIENT TO ANALYSE.**
- Complete the input sheet enclosed. Please note: It is important for fertiliser recommendations that you be specific about Land Use (if you grow a number of crops, then please note all of them).

a) Selecting the area



b) How to collect the sample



Collect at least 20 cores

The company is not responsible for the damage or loss of samples while in transit.

For further information please visit our website: www.albionlabservices.co.uk