

Soil pH Concerns

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. We've been processing about the normal number of soil samples through our office this winter, which is still fewer than it should be. One of the things that has been catching my eye though is the number of soil tests coming back with a pH of 6.0 or lower. These fields are acidic enough that they need treatment. One of the common ways that soils become acidic is through the heavy use of nitrogen fertilizers. What have we been growing a lot more acres of over the past 25 years? Corn. What fertilizer do we apply a lot of to corn. Yeah, nitrogen. When soil pH starts dropping below 6.0 we find a lot of problems start to crop up. Nutrients like phosphorus, potassium, sulfur and even nitrogen become less available below pH 6. Nitrogen fixing bacteria, that we rely so heavily on for soybeans and alfalfa also do poorly in soils with pH below 6. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Liming Basics

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Fortunately, acidic soils are fairly easily remedied by applying ground limestone or just lime. We are also fortunate that we have a good supply at a reasonable cost of ag lime in our area. Lime works as an antacid for our soil. When mixed with the soil it reacts with the acidity in the soil and neutralizes it. A simple soil test tells us how much we need to apply. It will normally take about three years to get the full acid neutralization but even in the first year it starts to make a difference. But, the lime needs to be mixed in the soil. Spreading it on the soil surface doesn't really work. We don't have to plow the ag lime under, but we do need to mix it up with the top 3 to 6 inches of soil either with a field cultivator or disc. I know some producers grimace at the thought of tilling their no till fields, but this is one of those cases where you need to! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Drier Conditions Likely Coming

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. We were fortunate to get some recent precipitation but most of our area of the state is still in an abnormally dry to moderate drought classification. Additionally it looks like the patterns are changing according to the climate prediction center. As the La Nina weather pattern strengthens it looks like the moisture will be drying up over the next two to three months at least. One of the things that the La Nina will also do is to send a lot of dry frontal passages through the state. Dry frontal passages at this time of year are notorious for bringing strong winds. Strong winds along with dry conditions stacked on top of an above average fuel load in ditches and rangelands leads us to an elevated wild fire risk into mid to late spring. It is crucial that we all be extra careful in the months ahead not to be the cause of a fire! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Prepping for Wild Fire

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. In recent years we have seen the tragic results of large uncontrollable wildfires not just in the arid west but even in our own state as well. It looks like the next several months are going to give us an elevated wildfire risk. If you live in a rural or even semi-rural area there are many steps you can take to reduce the risk of wildfires destroying your home or auxiliary structures. The Kansas Forest Service has a great bulletin called Protecting Your Home from Wildfire. It can be found on line or you can contact the Extension Office for a copy of it. There are many simple little things that can make a big difference, things like not stacking firewood next to your house or propane tank. Or simply being very careful about what types of trees and shrubs you have next to your house and even keeping vegetation mowed down. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Crunch Time for top Dressing Wheat and Brome

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. If you have already topdressed your wheat and brome grass, good for you! We had good precipitation events the end of December and end of January to help get that nitrogen moved down into the root zone so just as soon as spring growth starts, which could be almost any day now, the fertilizer is there for the plant roots to take up and utilize. If you haven't gotten your topdress fertilization applied, get it done as soon as possible. In recent years I've seen so many times that fertilization is postponed later and later into the winter. Then you wind up with a dry late winter or early spring and by the time we finally get enough precipitation to move that N into the root zone, it's too late to get the benefit from the fertilizer for this year. Don't let that happen this year. We may have a dry spring so lets get those topdress applications on now! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.