

Soil acidity at the Dowerin Field Days

Re-Lime
Time to Lime

The Avon Catchment Council Soil Acidity Project display at this year's Dowerin Field Days will be well worth a visit. The project team will be available to discuss the project and provide advice on the importance of soil sampling, acidity and liming.

Surface and subsurface acidity are major environmental and economic concerns in the central wheatbelt. Key project aims are to:

- Assess the current pH status of soils in the Avon River Basin.
- Promote the value of soil testing and monitoring soil pH changes over time.
- Promote the use of lime to ameliorate acid soils and treat on-going acidification.

Growers who have taken advantage of the Avon Catchment Council (ACC) subsidy to measure the subsurface soil pH have received valuable information and more precise liming recommendations.

Below is an example where an application of lime has raised topsoil pH but has not treated deeper soil. Soil sampling to 30 cm will allow farmers to target soils that require liming and re-liming.

	Topsoil pH (0–10 cm)	Midsoil pH (10–20 cm)	Subsoil pH (20–30 cm)
Paddock A (sand)	5.2	4.3	4.2
	5.7	4.2	4.0
	5.4	4.2	4.3
Paddock B (loam)	5.2	4.1	3.9
	5.5	4.1	4.0
	5.3	4.3	4.4
Paddock C (loam)	4.6	3.9	3.9
	5.2	4.2	4.2
	4.8	3.8	3.7

Extremely acid Moderately acid Slightly acid
Results like these are common throughout the Avon River Basin. Subsurface acidity is widespread.

Sampling completed to date shows:

- 78% of topsoils are under pH 5.5
- 59% of 10–20 cm subsurface soils are under pH 4.8

Therefore, lime use must increase to meet Avon Catchment Council targets*.



The ACC Soil Acidity Project display was awarded the 'Best Sustainable Farm Practices Display' at the 2006 Dowerin Field Days. Chris Gazey, DAFWA; David York, Precision SoilTech; Chantelle Noack, ACC; Steve Carr and Joel Andrew, Precision SoilTech.

Come and talk to the award winning team at the Dowerin Field Days

(Stand 217, the Precision SoilTech shed)

- Enquire about the ACC subsidy
- Why subsoils are so important
- Soil acidity and liming advice
- Why Spring is a good time to lime

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*The Avon Catchment Council has set a target pH_{CaCl2} of 5.5 for topsoils and 4.8 for subsurface soils in the Avon River Basin by 2020.

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