



Message from
Les and Patti

SAFE founders

We know that if the Birdsville Cup is washed out that Australia is getting an awful lot of rain! This augers well for future bumper harvests. However, we should spare a thought for all the soil inputs that have been leached down river and the enormous financial loss to those affected growers. This is one of the very good reasons to change to rock mineral fertiliser, with minimal loss during heavy rainfall and lower input costs. Apart from the financial rewards and the ecological benefits, there is the long term bonus of improved soil structure with non-erodible humus, which is the ultimate plant food.

Granular vs Foliar for Soil & Plant Nutrition

Fertiliser over the last fifty years has been utilised by many farmers in two basic forms, granular or foliar.

Many questions have been asked about the best way to fertilise. "Do I apply some granular or do I use a foliar?" The way forward is to look at the benefits for each application, and then apply the fertiliser suited for your soil and plant needs.

Benefits of Granular Nutrition: SAFE Fertiliser granular blends that both feed the soil and provide plant nutrition, reduce the effect of depleting the soil of nutrients. With a full spectrum of nutrients in the soil, the plant has the ability to produce to its full yield capability. Applying nutrients in a granular form is the most cost effective way to build soil nutrient levels.

Benefits of Foliar Nutrition: This method enables the farmer to fine-tune and control the provision of nutrients directly to the plant. Foliar nutrition also allows for the timing of specific nutrients to target growth stages of the plant. Due to the direct availability of nutrition, foliar fertilising enhances the quality of the produce whilst improving the overall health of the plant, allowing it to build up a resistance to pest and disease. Foliar fertiliser can be used to counteract adverse soil conditions and to stimulate the plant to take more nutrients through the roots. Liquid nutrients are easy to apply over the top of plants, via a boom spray or irrigation system, and through flood or trickle lines.



Report from Rohan Kingham of "Dalblair"

Dalblair is a property of 2,600 hectares, located 25km south of Tamworth, which I have managed for the past 11 years. It has the capacity to run 1,000 breeding cows and currently grows grain crops on 400 of the 1,000 hectares of arable country.

Due to the low price of grain over the past 5 years, the cattle herd has expanded as the grain growing has decreased. The increasing price of the inputs needed to grow crops (especially fertiliser) was a determining factor in reducing the amount of grain produced. Every year the agronomist was telling us to increase our fertiliser applications of nitrogen and phosphorus, and our crop yields were staying the same. This meant we were spending more money to achieve the same return. I constantly maintained that the crop yields were always determined by the one element that was most limiting, and it didn't matter how much nitrogen you put on your crop if it wasn't that limiting factor. I always thought it was

rainfall and I would not know till later that there were other elements that were just as limiting. Another issue I often asked the agronomist about was why 10 years ago we would plant a crop and walk away from it until harvest time without a problem. Now we face crop nutrient deficiencies, pests (such as aphids), army worms and fungus attacks (such as strip rust and net blotch). The only answer the agronomists could give us was that these were due to better crops being grown. Better for what?

Three years ago the Elias family purchased Dalblair and Steve Elias showed me a pamphlet from Les Dyne (a good friend of his). Steve told me that Les was producing this fertiliser and to tell him what I thought of it. I thought it

looked interesting and we should see if we could speak to someone about its merits. Then came my first meeting with Neville Janke who I now regard as the most knowledgeable person I have talked to about fertilisers, and plant and soil nutrition. Upon our first introduction I had said that he was just another snake oil salesman selling fertiliser and he would need to do some strong convincing to get us to use this fertiliser! After about 2 hours of questions and answers Neville had not only convinced me of this fertiliser, but converted me to his way of thinking. All these years we had been doing things back to front. We had been feeding the plants when we should have been feeding the soil.

Since then, we have been using SAFE Fertiliser on our grain and fodder crops, as well as on our native and improved pastures. Our first use of the fertiliser didn't give us greater yields, but produced the same yields with less fertiliser in a balanced mineral blend. This blend was cheaper and had given us the same outcome. We slowly started noticing small changes. We always grow forage sorghum and usually the crop would start to show signs of running out of nitrogen and nutrients after two heavy grazes at the end of summer. The agronomist would always say that we had to put on more nitrogen as the forage would start to yellow and go stripey. I would say that we only have a month or two of grazing left, so I could not justify the cost. After a year of using the mineral blend on the forage, we would wait again for the yellowing to appear late in the season. But this time it didn't appear! The crop remained healthy right up to the first frost. That same year we applied mineral blend to our barley crops. Come harvest time, the season had cut out and the yields were down in the whole district, as were ours. Interestingly though, the neighbours were all complaining the protein was even too low for the barley to be graded as malt. I thought ours would be the same until I got it tested to find it had been accepted as malt. The crop had only done 1% better for protein than the district, but that was enough to get it into malt and a \$40 per tonne premium.

Hear Rohan Kingham present a case study on Dalblair at the Tamworth Workshop. See other side for details.

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On the Road with Neville Janke

I have just completed a run through North Queensland in the Mackay to the Cairns region and the countryside looks great.

However, the banana prices are down and the quality in the sugar cane is low due to the effects of a very wet start to the year, which has taken its toll as the crops go to harvest. The sugar mill at Babinda had only seven days of production in four weeks and there is more rain on the way. The very wet winter this year has seen lower sugar levels. There is some good news! I visited a number of demonstration plots that I have been involved with and, as the photograph shows, the cane is ready to harvest. It was very interesting to observe the extra canes per stool and the increased thickness of the stem in those areas that are on a program with mineral fertiliser and reduced nitrogen. It will be very interesting to see the difference in yield and sugar levels at harvest.

Inspecting the turf at the Hillside Turf operation was rewarding. The results can be seen from reducing the chemical use and building organic carbon levels to produce good strong turf ready for market. Ivan and Jason have been following a program to build up the

mineral levels in the soil to reduce the fungus and disease problems associated with a very high rainfall and humid conditions in the Proserpine area. Ivan says the results are fantastic as he has reduced the spraying of fungicide and has strong turf with no wastage. Jason says there is a bit of money left in the bank so that is a real positive.

John Sweet organised two full days of looking at farming operations and assisting farmers to improve operations in line with Reef Rescue. We talked with groups and presented the easy steps to incorporating minerals into each operation with little disruption to their agricultural program. Farmers were impressed with the ease of application and the ability to hold nitrogen close to the root zone whilst giving the plant a full nutrient package. The plant then uses natural carbon in the process of producing sugar. The tour of farms opened the eyes of growers to the simple truths that have been lost in the chemical world; minerals are the foundation to life, and that it is cost effective to grow healthy, good quality food.

Guest Speakers include:

Neville Janke - Learning about Soil Nutrition & the Steps of Improvement

John Lawrie - The Role of Lime in an Organic Environment

Lester Thearle - Soil Health in Practice

Phil Stacey - Your Soil Healthcard

Cam McKellar - Case Study "Inveraray Downs"

Rohan Kingham - Case Study "Dalblair"

Workshop Details

A free workshop to be held Wednesday 29th September at the the Tamworth Golf Club 9am-3pm.

To register please contact **Anne Michie** 02 6762 1733 or 0432 258 983, anne.m@ewenviroag.com.au

Spring Time Fertiliser

Time to plant the summer crops - cotton, corn, beans, sorghum etc

Granular Fertiliser options:

- ExtraPhos & Potash @ 300kg/ha can be spread on to soil and worked in
- DAP Supablend @ 150kg/ha applied at planting or spread in front of the planter
- NPK 15.3.8 @ 120kg/ha applied beside the seed or down the row behind the seed

Foliar Fertiliser Options:

- Activ-8: Certified organic soil conditioner @ 4L/ha sprayed onto soil or put through irrigation
- Vital Activator: A microbe kick-start to stimulate growth @ 10L/ha
- Vital Phos: Builds strong root systems direct with the seed @ 6L/ha
- Vital P Blast: High analysis quick start or top up @ 10L/ha applied down the row

Winter Crop Top-up

Best crop potential in years - wheat, barley, oats, peas, brassicas, lettuce etc

Granular Fertiliser options:

- NPK Supablend @ 80kg/ha side dress the rows
- Safe Coated Nitrogen @ 60kg/ha spread over the top or side dress

Foliar Fertiliser Options:

- Vital Calcium @ 5L/ha sprayed over the top to increase cell structure
- Vital Mix @ 6L/ha the complete nutrient package, boom sprayed or trickle applied
- Vital K Blast @ 6L/ha a blast of potassium assists the plant in fruiting

