

## **Last Minute Prep for 2022 Spring Crops**

by Kitty O'Neil, PhD, CCA

Spring planting season is fast approaching, but there's time for some last-minute preparations. While we always prioritize efficient use of fertilizers, seed and other inputs, 2022 pricing and availability puts and extra importance on this strategy. How many items can you cross off this to-do list?

- ❑ Sample any fields needing an up-to-date soil test. We recommend testing soils, using a Morgan test, every 3-5 years for best fertility planning. Start the season with a clear understanding of which fields need which nutrients for which cropping plan. Now that the surface 8" of soil has mostly thawed, there's no time like the present to collect and submit samples to inform your spring applications. The DairyOne lab in Ithaca is the easiest place to submit samples for a Morgan test, contact your local CCE office for info on free sample transportation too.
- ❑ Inventory and plan all your nitrogen (N) credits for sod, manure, cover crops, 2021 crop residues, and any other source your farm uses. It's also not too late to submit manure samples for analysis along with those soil samples. A good analysis will help assign manure distribution most efficiently across your farm. Strategize for efficiency – where will you get the best return on your manure?
- ❑ Make sure your lime and fertilizer application equipment is functioning smoothly and accurately. Take the time to calibrate all these implements to ensure that waste is minimized and that you know exactly where your fertilizer expenses are going. Included in this list are standalone spreaders, but also fertilizer delivery systems on planters. Inspect those 2x2 coulters and tubes to make sure you're getting the placement you expect too. Applying in-furrow insecticides? Inspect and tune those meters and tubes as well.
- ❑ While your planters are in the shop, confirm that they're adjusted to deliver seed with the correct placement and rate too. If you've never calibrated your drills and planters before, 2022 is just the motivation you need to figure it out. Penn State has an excellent drill calibration fact sheet, linked below. Use the correct planter calibration methods recommended by your planter manufacturer.
- ❑ Lastly, perform a through tune-up on your sprayers. Chemicals are also expensive and dear this year, so check tank and boom pressures at anticipated ground speeds and rpms and calibrate flow rates out of each boom or nozzle. Update your inventory of replacement pump and nozzle parts.

This year is likely to be stressful, so reach out to CCE for help whenever needed. We can help you research and calculate best practices and approaches if you're unsure. Mike and Kitty are always available for consultation at the email addresses and phone numbers below.

### Additional Resources:

1. Duiker, S., R. Hoover and J. Myers. 2013. Calibration of Grain/Seed Drills, Agronomy Facts #75. Penn State Extension. [https://extension.psu.edu/downloadable/download/sample/sample\\_id/412/](https://extension.psu.edu/downloadable/download/sample/sample_id/412/)

For more information about field crop and soil management, contact your local Cornell Cooperative Extension office or your CCE Regional Field Crops and Soils Specialists, Mike Hunter and Kitty O'Neil.

Kitty O'Neil  
CCE Canton Office  
(315) 854-1218  
[kitty.oneil@cornell.edu](mailto:kitty.oneil@cornell.edu)

Mike Hunter  
CCE Watertown Office  
(315) 788-8450  
[meh27@cornell.edu](mailto:meh27@cornell.edu)

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