



Annual General Meeting

The Soil Health Group Annual General Meeting and celebration for the completion of our successful first year.

DATE: Tuesday 5th October 2010

WHERE: Coleraine Hotel (for tea - at own expense)

TIME: 6:00 pm (Meeting to commence at 8:00pm)

RSVP by Friday 1st October (for catering purposes)

CONTACT: Gill Fry

P: 5573 4539

E: gill.fry@networksw.com.au

IT'S TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Membership forms are in the new brochure which has been sent out with the notice of the AGM.

They have also been posted out with this newsletter

Membership is only \$40 per family for the year
This group is a not for profit group and relies on funding to continue the good work on raising the awareness and understanding of soil health. We hope you will join us.

September 2010

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This newsletter is going out to all people who subscribed to the Soil Health days or have asked to be included to receive information on soil health.

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide the latest information on Soil Health, recent events, demonstration farms and upcoming events.

Contact;

Gill Fry,

Executive Officer

Soil Health Group

P: (03) 5573 4539

E: gill.fry@networksw.com.au

Activities proposed for this financial year

Activity	When
Climate change workshop - partnership with Organic Federation	Tuesday 28th September
Annual General Meeting and dinner	Tuesday 5th October
Field Walk – Bill Stonnill Demonstration farm, Guest speaker - Graeme Hand	Wednesday 3rd November
Soil Health Training Course – An introduction to soil health	February
Speaker - soil acidity	March
Soil Testing, understanding soil test results	April/May
Christine Jones	May /June



Norm Cooper has written the following article describing the six requirements for a healthy soil.

Norm is a soil and organic consultant based at Koroit.

The purpose of farming is to grow feed for our animals. This can be either good or bad quality. If we grow bad quality feed we end up with poor quality stock. It is therefore important to grow the highest quality feed we can. And this can only be grown from high quality soils.

We can then define healthy soils as those which produce high quality feed.

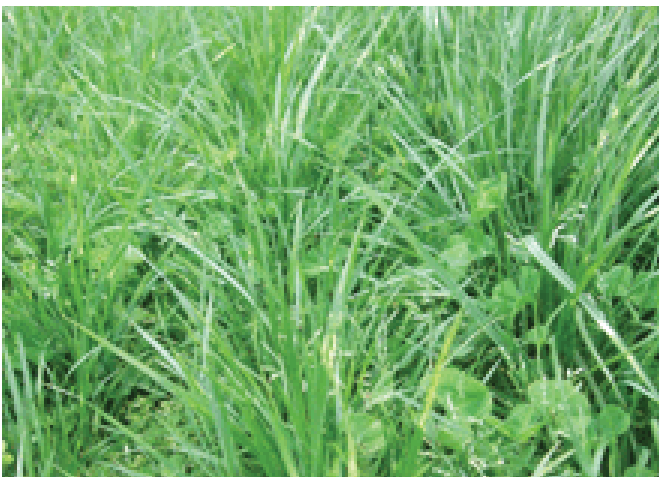
There are six requirements for a soil to be healthy and they all need to be in balance. They are;

- air,
- water,
- friability,
- nutrients or food,
- microbes and
- carbon.

Balance in all of these things gets the best results.

Air, water and friability

Lack of friability for instance can cause tight soils which then lack air, lack moisture and restrict root action.



Feed quality is important

Nutrient Uptake

Plants have two channels of nutrient uptake;

- water soluble and
- the photosynthetic channel.

Most common fertilisers are water soluble and need to be constantly replenished. Because of their water soluble character, they leach and volatilise with great losses at certain times. And the use of water soluble fertilisers blocks the photosynthesis pathway for the plant.

An example would be the application of urea which tells the plant not to produce nitrogen, which is processed by the plant (by nodulation) from nitrogen it obtained from the air. Remember that air contains about 75% N. And it is free.

Microbes

Adding to the scene at this stage is the need for microbes. To have healthy soils, there must be a balance of microbial activity.

Microbes work as a complimentary system, each relying on the other for continual existence. Without microbes, photosynthesis cannot work.

Carbon

And the end result of all this is the sequestration of soil carbon.

Carbon comes in different forms; inert carbon such as diamonds, and active carbon such as humus and labile carbon and many others in between.

Carbon is the main source of energy needed by all living beings. Water soluble fertilisers, stocking practices, chemical sprays, cultivation practises have all effected both soil carbon and microbe populations.

Most water soluble fertilisers create energy by activating the carbon in our soils. There recently has been fertilisers listed as certified to produce carbon in the soil. In other words, they activate photosynthesis in the plant.

continued next page

Therefore the fertilisers we have been using for around a century have created soils that:

- create environmental problems
- reduce needed microbe populations
- use up soil carbon
- preclude photosynthesis, the basis for soil carbon
- increase acidity
- reduce humus
- create a tighter soil with
 - less air
 - less root action
 - less water retention
 - acid soils

Acid soils create nutrient lock up of some nutrients, such as phosphate locked up as tricalcium phosphate, which also locks up calcium. Acid soils also increase the availability of manganese and aluminium.



Sheep grazing lucerne

Disclaimer

The information provided in this publication is intended for general use, to assist public knowledge and discussion to improve soil health. Readers are advised that this information may be incomplete or unsuitable for use in specific situations. Before taking any action or decision based on the information in this publication, readers should seek professional, scientific and technical advice. The authors opinion does not necessarily reflect that of the Soil Health Group. To the extent permitted by law, the author and its project partners do not assume liability of any kind resulting from any persons use or reliance upon the content of this publication.

Soil Testing

The first step to improve soils is to get the best soil test that is available.

My recommendation is to get a soil test that shows what is in the soil (an Albrecht test) and a test that shows what is plant available (a Reams test) from an independent recognised laboratory.

You may save \$50 or \$80 by getting a cheaper soil test, but getting the right soil test can save you money by directing you to a better treatment which gives you higher quality feed.

It is commonly believed that if a soil test shows a deficiency in an element that it should be added to the soil. This overlooks the fact that there may be sufficient in the soil but not in an available form. By adding this perceived shortage, it creates a further imbalance which creates more problems.

For instance; too much phosphorus inhibits microbial activity. As these nutrients become greater, feed value is affected because micronutrients needed for overall health have diminished.

Further if the soil is acidic, plants cannot produce well because of higher aluminium levels in the soil. This restricts the ability of roots to penetrate the soil and so limits the availability to access nutrients and moisture.

Because of limited root activity, plants become water reliable and not able to bridge stress periods in the weather, reducing quality and quantity of feed.

Remember we are growing a commodity to feed animals and the animal's health relies on what they are fed.

This can only be done from a balanced
HEALTHY SOIL.

It is important to seek expert advice for your particular farm scenario.

Events



Soil Health
Group

Soil Health Group activities roundup

In June we partnered with the Carbon Farmers of Australia to bring to Hamilton a one day course on understanding Soil Carbon and soil carbon trading. This was a very informative day which promoted much discussion. Every attendee went home with the Carbon Farmers Handbook. We have some extra copies in the Soil Health Group Library if you would like to borrow one.

In July a partnership day with BEST proved very popular. Despite a wet and windy and VERY cold day, over 30 people attended the day to find out more about alternative fertiliser applications. Despite the guest speaker getting bogged in the driveway (!) it was good to see a number of new faces interested in finding out more about soil health.

After much discussion and with members valuable input, the Soil Health Group Committee have put together a program for this financial year. Below is listed the events the Soil Health Group plan to hold this year.

Please don't forget to renew your membership so that we can continue to bring you an excellent range of events. If you haven't yet joined us, please consider filling in the membership form on the website or just contact me and I will send you one.

As always, we rely on generous sponsorship to run these events. If anyone would like to partner with us to sponsor any of the events or programs, we would love to hear from you.

Please contact Gill Fry on 5573 4539 or email gill.fry@networksw.com.au

Climate Change Workshop

The workshop covers

- climate change background,
- the carbon market,
- how to build the most valuable form of soil carbon, humus
- farming strategies that maintain production and sequester carbon,
- marketing/business impacts of climate change.

DATE: September 28th

TIME: 9am – 4pm

PLACE: George Hotel, Hamilton

COST: \$40 (including lunch and manual)

Register NOW by contacting; Norm Cooper, Farming Focus

P: 5565 8333

M: 0428 761 109



The workshop is presented by Tim Marshall from TM Organics. Tim is Deputy Chair of the Organic Federation of Australia, was co-founder of organic certifier NASAA, and has visited more than 3000 organic and organic in conversion properties in 25 countries. He is also the author of numerous books and articles and is a lively and engaging presenter.

Attendees also receive a manual that includes chapters on managing vegetative cover, use of green manures, cover crops, living mulches, crop rotations, native & improved pastures, managing water resources, monitoring, reporting and understanding the marketplace.



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Soil Health Group

Farm walk



When	Wednesday 3rd November
Where	Bill and Merissa Stonnill's (Fire map ref 430 E26) Meet at Tahara Cricket Club Rooms, Tahara (south of Coleraine)
What	<p>Presentation, farm walk and BBQ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See one of our demonstration farms. • Discussion on Soil Health Group trial; what has been tried and what seems to be working. • Guest speaker - Graeme Hand. Graeme will speak on grazing management and native grass trials on Bills farm.
Time	10.00 am to 1.00 pm Register at 9.30 am
Cost	<p>Members - \$10 Non members - \$20</p> <p>(includes BBQ lunch)</p>
RSVP	<p>Please RSVP by November 1st for catering purposes Bill Stonnill, P: 5575 4277, Mob: 0408 666 356 E: gatta@spin.net.au</p>

Classifieds



In this newsletter we have a Classifieds section. You can advertise anything agriculturally based or something to do with natural resource management. Our newsletter goes out to over 200 farmers so you can be assured you are meeting your demographic mark.

The cost of advertising is;

- 10cm x 10cm - \$10
- Half page (14 cm x 20cm wide) - \$20
- Full page (29 cm x 20 cm wide) - \$40

A 5% discount applies if an ad is taken out for four issues and paid upfront

Newsletters come out quarterly and the deadline for our next issue is 23rd November.

All classified items are to be emailed to Gill Fry at gill.fry@networksw.com.au and a cheque sent to our Treasurer,

Gary Gebert,
6544 Dartmoor-Hamilton Rd,
Yulecart,
VIC 3301

Items to be included in the newsletter classifieds are at the discretion of the Executive Officer.

We do not endorse products to ensure we always remain unbiased.



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Classifieds



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Agents



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Introducing Peter Ham

Peter is a qualified local agronomist with several years of industry experience and many years of practical farming experience. Peter has a history of relating both animal and plant health issues back to soil health issues, focusing on sustainable and efficient production systems. Having spent time with 'LawrieCo Biological farming' he has a good understanding of more natural production systems helping to maintain soil, plant and animal health. Peter's aim now is to help combine natural farming systems with conventional science. Contact Peter to discuss your soil needs.

Phone: 0448 905 888

Email: peterham@hamiltonproduce.com.au



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Ph: (03) 5571 2822 Fax: (03) 5571 2411



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Check www.twinn.com.au for more trial results on different crops

<i>Treatments</i>	<i>UAN</i>	<i>TwinN</i>	<i>Yield</i>
T1	30L/ha	Nil	1769 kg/ha
T2	Nil	Yes	1920 kg/ha
T3	15L/ha	Yes	1996 kg/ha
T4	Nil	Nil	1596 kg/ha

TwinN high performance microbes: a breakthrough technology that guarantees very high populations of free living nitrogen fixing microbes, easily applied to any crop (legume and non-legume) by foliar or fertigation. One vial treats 5 hectares. Twin plant growth promoting microbes produce auxins and organic acids to release bound soil nutrients.

Ideal Application Time is Now



For More Info Contact Southern Soils:

- Graeme 0457 798 781 (Western Districts-North/Wimmera/Mallee)
- Southern Soils 08 87396502 (SA/Western Districts-South)
- info@southernsoils.com.au

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INNOVATIVE LIQUID FISH FERTILISER IDEAL FOR FOLIAR TOP DRESSING OF CROPS

For some years now, an innovative and gutsy liquid fertiliser has been the 'quiet achiever' of the fertiliser market, making a modest but important contribution to the improved health and yields of a range of crops.

With national rural distribution, through the 627 member group of Australian Independent Rural Retailers network, this gives growers Australia wide, access to the environmentally friendly and unique liquid fertiliser, Charlie Carp. Charlie Carp is made from whole European Carp, 'the rabbit' which infests our rivers, lakes and waterways. This liquid fertiliser is a balanced fertiliser which supplies a full range of soil-replenishing nutrients and minerals. With an NPK of 9:2:6, it can be applied to cereal crops, pasture and fodder crops, citrus fruit, stone fruit, vegetables and grapes. It is screened through 100 micron filters so that it can be applied through boom sprays, aircraft and fertigation systems.

Ian Fuller, General Manager of Charlie Carp Ltd, explained the advantages of Charlie Carp. He said, "It is such a cost effective product. Compared to conventional fertilisers, Charlie Carp can be applied for significantly less cost per hectare. Grower trials show Charlie Carp to out-yield conventional top dressing applications, by up to 10%. Farmers can grow more for less. It is a persuasive argument for farmers to try the product and see the results for themselves."

Nutrient demand curves indicate stages in a plant's life cycle when the need for some nutrients are greater than its' physiological capacity to supply itself, even when soil nutrients are present in the soil. How do we solve that? Charlie Carp, as a liquid foliar fertiliser, puts nutrients directly into plant leaves, increasing the rate of photosynthesis and by doing so stimulating the growth and nutrient absorption by plant roots. High protein Charlie Carp has a balanced NPK and provides a range of essential micro nutrients or trace elements, including boron, calcium, copper, iron, manganese, sodium, sulphur, zinc, molybdenum, chromium, cobalt and nickel. Sixteen elements are considered essential for plant growth. When you include the hydrogen, carbon and oxygen available from the air and water Charlie Carp offers so much more than traditional chemical fertilisers.

With foliar fertilisation, the readily available nutrients are more easily utilised through the leaves. They are directly available to a plant and do not have to be dissolved by moisture before going into the soil solution. The disadvantage of granular fertilisers, is that they require a rain event, plus there is the danger of essential elements becoming fixed and difficult for the plant to access. Foliar spray tends to increase the uptake of major nutrients, far in excess of the input levels.

Charlie Carp Foliar Fertiliser, applied whilst the plant is not in water stress and when there is growth activity, can help correct deficiencies, strengthen weak or damaged crops, speed growth and grow better plants. This is of course, the bottom line.

Experience has shown that farmers should continue to use a granular product at sowing. Charlie Carp should then be used for top dressing. It is fast acting and economical.

Ian said, "Our winter crops are off to a fabulous start this year. Farmers want the best possible result, at the best possible price. They also want to use a product which is more natural and not chemical based. Ridding our rivers and lakes of the dreaded Carp and having better and healthier crops is a true win, win situation, except for the Carp, I suppose."



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