



Products & Advice for Soil Regeneration & Animal Nutrition



From the Directors...

2008 has commenced as a very happy new year for many with wide-spread rain received throughout many parts of Australia... unfortunately too much water in some areas!

The life in your soil... in particular the microbe and worm activity... is critical for healthy soil and crops. Just as the dry weather we've faced over recent years is detrimental to soil life, so too are the wet and water logging conditions experienced in areas throughout Qld and NSW during the recent floods.

Soil that is covered with water for more than one hour results in a rapid decline in microbial populations... so if your property has been affected by extreme rainfall, it can be very beneficial to aerate your soil.

Minerals, mulch, moisture, and air are essential ingredients for stimulating and building soil microbe populations... and the high use of chemical fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides, high speed or excessive tillage are some of the quickest ways to destroy these unpaid workers in your soil.

While our Natra Min products will be having a minimal price increase in March, the major influence on your budget this year will be the ongoing rising costs for water soluble fertilizer with some fertilizers topping the \$1000 / tonne mark.

It is important to remember that water soluble fertilizers don't really fertilize the soil in the sense of increasing the soil fertility. There are at least 104 elements in nature, and over 80 of these have been found to play a role in sustaining healthy plant growth. At best, most chemical fertilizers only provide a hand ful of these elements.

Chemical fertilizers can be very useful in temporarily boosting production, but over the decades we have observed an ever increasing dependency on water soluble fertilizer resulting in the need to constantly increase application rates.

To be able to turn this around and reduce fertilizer needs, it is essential to follow a program that supports all aspects of soil fertility... Nutritional, Biological and Structural. Re-mineralization with Natra Min provides essential minerals and it is bio-activated to stimulate soil life... helping to re-build your soil fertility.

Talk to one of our Field Advisors and we will work with you to restore the fertility in your soil... helping to ensure a 'productive' New Year!

Warm Regards, Trevor & Wendy Zerner

As Fertilizer Prices Soar... Learn How to Minimize the Cost!

The price of many commonly used chemical fertilizers have now exceeded \$1,000 / tonne... and with further rises likely, can you afford to foot the bill?

What are your choices? Settle for yet another blow to your profitability? ... or take action now to address soil fertility problems... thus reducing your dependence on water soluble fertilizers.

40% REDUCTION IN USE OF UREA...

Reduced costs... and better pasture response

AgSolutions has assisted many farmers in all sectors of agriculture to improve their soil fertility and reduce their chemical fertilizer inputs. In our last newsletter, Daniel Parker revealed how he has reduced his Nitrogen requirements on intensive Rye grass and other pastures by 40%.

With similar results in other areas of agriculture... small crops, grain, legumes, cotton, cane and tree crops... we can assist you to reduce your fertilizer inputs... provided that you are committed to improving the health of your soil. At a recent 'organic carbon' workshop attended by AgSolutions' Field Advisors, soil scientists indicated that in healthy soil, there should be at least 4 worms in every shovel full of dirt.

Using worm activity as a guide... how healthy is your soil? In many instances, the overuse of chemical fertilizers and high speed tillage have been contributing factors to a lack of worm activity. There are very few farms where, on our initial visit, we can find any worms in the soil!

Rising Super Phosphate prices have also exceeded the budget for many cattle, fat lamb and wool growers in the New England district. Coupled with the rising costs, many graziers have also reported a lack of pasture response to Super... highlighting the importance of applying secondary and trace elements to unlock the Phosphorus that is tied up in these soils. (Fertilizer Industry Handbook)

The use of Natra Min in this region has grown dramatically in the last 5 years .

How can we assist you?

We believe that information is vital... so in addition to providing you with free information / field day seminars (see back of newsletter)... our technical field advisors can work closely with you to assess soil condition, cropping and fertilizer history and also perform a soil analysis to determine the most effective soil management program to rebuild fertility in your soil and to provide the nutrient requirements for your current crop.

continued...

In this Edition...



Feed Microbes to achieve balanced soil... (page 2)

Natra Min... more effective and less expensive.

Natra Min Cal-S Trials at Whyalla Feedlot... (page 3)

The soil is soft... there is a noticeable difference.

Farmers seek system that reaps rewards... (page 4)

Field day... the benefits of Natra Min and Cell Grazing.

continued ...

As Fertilizer Costs Soar... Learn How to Avoid the Expense!

Reduce your fertilizer requirements...

Natra Min is a soil conditioner... and as well as assisting to balance soil pH, it also acts as a soil breaker... eliminating the expense of using Lime and Gypsum.

For dryland pasture, Natra Min can often replace the use of all other fertilizer. For more intensive pasture and crops, the use of Natra Min can often allow you to reduce water soluble fertilizer by 25% to 50% in the initial stages.

The decision of how much to reduce the amount of chemical fertilizer depends on what you're growing, soil condition and soil test results... as well as taking into consideration previous crops grown and the level of fertilizer previously used.

There are no short cuts...

In our last newsletter, farmer Murray Nichols was correct in saying that "too many of us farmers try a product once and then stop using it".

We would like to promise to fix all of your soil fertility problems overnight... and sometimes farmers can see a distinct difference in the first year... however **the most dramatic results can be found on those properties where farmers have been using the Natra Min program for at least 2 or 3 years.**

Step 1: Soil Testing...

Contact us to have a soil test performed or alternatively we can evaluate an existing soil test for you.

A soil test provides a snap shot of what nutrients are currently available in your soil. More importantly it also highlights issues such as high nutrient levels that may be 'locking up' or reducing the availability of other minerals or trace elements. It is also critical to look at chloride, sodium, magnesium and organic carbon levels to identify any soil structural problems and to establish a base level as to how healthy your soil is.

Natra Min, combined with a soil management program of crop rotation which includes a diversity of plants to achieve varied root depths, are simple yet effective ways of improving the fertility of your soil... and reducing your expenses.

Give us a call...

To get help with your soil management program, talk to us about your cropping needs. We'll work with you to evaluate all of your fertilizer needs, not just your Natra Min program.

With Chemical fertilizers predicted to have yet another price rise in the near future a sensible New Year's Resolution would be to call AgSolutions now! Phone 1800 81 57 57.

Feed your soil... and your soil will feed your crop

NATRA MIN



Natra Min... a replacement for Gypsum... with extra benefits...

John Allen of Oaklands Farms, Beerwah and Murgon knows the importance of biological activity in his soil. He now uses Natra Min to replace gypsum in his soil management program because it delivers bio-activated minerals and trace elements.

The Allen family grows ginger and strawberries as well as running cattle on improved pastures in the Beerwah district, while lucerne and grain remain the focus for the Murgon property.

More balanced soil ...

With ginger being a crop that requires an intensive soil program, John is committed to ensuring that his soil provides a balanced environment. "Fusarium costs us hundreds of thousands of dollars each year. It's sometimes hard to quantify products but the ginger we dig under Natra Min is definitely much better quality. Natra Min fits into our ginger program as a soil amendment and also provides a balanced mineral fertilizer that feeds the soil microbes."

Exceeding \$1,000 per tonne, John views chemical fertilizers as an expensive alternative, and foresees Natra Min as an essential ingredient in future soil programs. "If we are able to fertilize and balance our soils in more effective and less expensive way, then that's what we'll continue to do."

Lucerne...

Less than 12 months ago, Col and Jackie Clarke (longtime advocates of Natra Min) passed the Natra Min baton to John Allen when he purchased their Murgon property.

"We've just had a tissue test done on the Lucerne at Murgon and it's as close to perfect as I've seen, so there is certainly no need to alter the program. Natra Min is applied in combination with feedlot manure and the results are outstanding."

Barley...

Recently the barley was harvested at Murgon and despite being stressed for 90% of its lifespan, it still yielded an encouraging 1.6t/acre. The crop was grown under a previous application of Natra Min Cal-S, manure and a very light application of DAP.

"We were extremely happy with the yield - considering the season, it was a pleasant boost to returns!"

John concludes... "Natra Min is part of the bigger picture. In soil programs there's no single fix but it is imperative that whatever program is adopted, it benefits the soil's biology and microbes."

BROAD SPECTRUM MINERALS... Essential for Soil and Animal Health

Whyalla Feedlot trials show the benefits of Natra Min Cal-S



Gino De Stefani, Whyalla Farm Manager, and Simon Piccini, Agronomist, Texas Rural Traders are both impressed with the trial results... *there was an immediate improvement in soil structure after the first application of Natra Min Cal-S, however the softness and texture of the soil since the second application has been dramatic.*

Natra Min Cal-S Centre Pivot Trials: 2006 - 2007

The Background...

Whyalla Feedlot Farm Manager, Gino De Stefani, oversees Whyalla's farming operations of over 1000 hectares of both irrigated and dryland crops for the 50,000 head capacity feedlot west of Texas.

A key concern for Whyalla was the presence of hard crusting soil that impacted on both cultivation and water infiltration. Once the soil crusts on top, water tends to run-off rather than penetrate.

Under the guidance of Texas Rural Traders Agronomist, Simon Piccini, Gino began trialing the benefits of Natra Min Cal-S as a soil conditioner in early 2006. Based on the results of these trials, Natra Min Cal-S was incorporated into the program for most of their irrigated country during 2007.

Monitoring Results...

The three centre pivots that were selected were split in half to produce 3 treatment areas and 3 controls. Soil samples were taken as part of the trial for future monitoring by consulting Agronomist Simon Piccini, of Texas Rural Traders.

According to Gino De Stefani, there was an immediate improvement in soil structure after the first application of Natra Min Cal-S, however the softness and texture of the soil since the second application has been dramatic.

"Initially, you couldn't dig the soil with your hands, and when soil samples were taken prior to the trial, the soil probe wouldn't even penetrate the surface crust.

There is a noticeable difference between the treated and untreated areas of all three pivots. Just walking across the circles, you now sink into the soil where the Natra Min Cal-S was applied at 400kg/ha. Even on the tractor we notice the softness of the ground when we're baling."

Improved moisture infiltration and retention...

As a result of applying Natra Min Cal-S, moisture infiltration and retention has improved substantially, enabling Gino to double crop these areas. The ground where Cal-S was applied is soft on top yet moist underneath... a breakthrough for these soils that were prone to crusting and setting hard.

Because the soil is softer and has better moisture infiltration, Gino also expects that given a good season this year, he will see more improvements in crop quality and production.

Reduced Chloride and Sodium levels...

Prior to applying Natra Min Cal-S, Chloride and Sodium levels were reported as high in these soils - Whyalla has now seen a reduction of these levels.

Nutrient levels improve ...

According to Gino, "our nutrient levels were quite high for the major nutrients (N, P, K, S) so we haven't used any other inputs. After double cropping, the interesting result has been that the Phosphorus levels have increased (or been released) where Natra Min Cal-S has been used... despite having no Phosphorus applied."

Natra Min blends are biologically activated by a catalyst designed to stimulate soil microbes... thus assisting to balance soil pH, unlock soil mineral and trace element availability, as well as improving the utilization of applied fertilizer.

Natra Min Cal-S results are evident...



Prior to Natra Min Cal-S soil was hard and crusted



Soft and friable soil after two applications of Natra Min Cal-S

With the reduction in water run-off and increased soil moisture retention in the treated areas, the increased water efficiency has been a noticeable benefit.

Given the positive results of these trials, Gino plans to continue to use Natra Min Cal-S as a soil amendment.

Results were convincing...

Agronomist Simon Piccini concludes, "Natra Min was new to this area and monitoring the Whyalla trials has been critical to ensure that we could measure a benefit. The 2006 Natra Min Cal-S trials were convincing, with measurable results as well as visual benefits... providing a base for Whyalla to continue using Cal-S in their 2007 program.

Natra Min Cal-S is now widely used by our growers as a soil conditioner in the Texas and surrounding areas (at 300-400 kg/ha)... replacing the use of Gypsum. The results are in the paddock."

For further information on the use of Natra Min Cal-S, contact AgSolutions Australia on 1800 81 57 57.

Feed Your Soil... and Your Soil will Feed Your Crop

Farmers seek systems that reap rewards...



Field Day... the benefits of Cell Grazing and Natra Min

AgSolutions Australia, in conjunction with Shiralee Produce, Grafton, recently hosted a field-day at Tony and Melaine Dougherty's Grafton property.

Over 90 farmers attended the breakfast event, which showcased topics such as soil management, animal nutrition, and the benefits of low chemical farming.

According to Tony, "Natra Min has been our only fertilizer input for some time and the benefits are obvious in our pasture with an enormous increase in clover. Compared to areas where Natra Min has not been applied, there is a slight improvement after one application... however, the paddocks that have had 3 or 4 applications of Natra Min are where the pastures have really taken off."

Of great interest to local farmers was the opportunity to witness firsthand what Tony and Melaine Dougherty have managed to achieve by combining both Natra Min Mineral Fertilizer with planned cell grazing in their pasture management program. The implementation of cell grazing and mulching has promoted even grazing and reduced competition, with the benefits being obvious within the first year.

In recent years Tony has applied Natra Min HI-Phos and K-Phos at the rate of 300kg/ha.

AgSolutions' Field Advisor, Roger Newman, reminds farmers that commitment to a program is the key. "Soil, crop and pasture improvement takes time, and many of the initial Natra Min benefits such as improvements in soil biology, soil structure, water infiltration and root development are the key indicators in the early stages. As Tony has highlighted, the benefits of Natra Min become more obvious after 2 or 3 applications."

AgSolutions wishes to thank our hosts Tony and Melaine Dougherty along with the Rural Team at Shiralee Produce for ensuring the success of this event.

For further information on forthcoming field-days in your region, please contact **AgSolutions** Australia on 1800 81 57 57.



SUPERIOR
MINERAL SUPPLEMENT

MEGA MINERALS
LICK BLOCKS

Broad Spectrum Minerals
and Trace Elements for Your Stock

Winner of \$500 worth of Natra Min

Thank you to all of our customers who introduced others to the prospect of unlocking the potential in their soil and animals through our Referral Program. We appreciate your enthusiasm and assistance.

Congratulations to Richard Makim from Ben Lomond, NSW who has won \$500 worth of **AgSolutions'** products through his referral efforts!

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For answers to your animal nutrition and soil fertility questions, talk to one of our trained Field Advisors

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