

Burrus BUZZ

Delivering more than just seed

10.25.16

Who should be fall applying their fertilizer?

by Josh Gunther, Product Lead

This time of year while wrapping up harvest, many growers are starting to think about fall applied nitrogen fertilizer. One of the biggest problems when applying fall nitrogen is getting in a hurry; you have to wait for soil temperatures to cool down before applying nitrogen. The ideal condition for applying anhydrous is when soil temperature falls to and remains below 50° F. Typically, this is after the third week in October for the majority of the Burrus footprint. To quickly check the current soil temperatures in both Illinois and Missouri, use the link on our website homepage.

When applying fall fertilizers, it is important to remember that they are, at best, equal to if not less effective than in-season applications. Fall application opens fertilizer to a greater possibility of denitrification and leaching. The threat of denitrification makes it crucial that you use a specially labeled nitrification inhibitor. This will protect your fertilizer investment and make sure most of the nitrogen will be there the following year for your crop. Lastly, the Burrus research team recommends that you strongly consider fall applications with a split nitrogen program. If you split your application and apply a portion of your nitrogen during the following spring, you will have the greatest amount of nitrogen when plants need it the most, while decreasing your nitrogen loss.

An important thing to remember when applying fall fertilizers is to never apply nitrogen on frozen ground. If fertilizers are spread on top of frozen ground, it is very likely that a large portion of those nutrients will be lost due to runoff when it starts to thaw. Also, avoid applying nitrogen in the fall on sandy soils or poorly drained soils. Sandier soils don't have the CEC (Cation Exchange Capacity) required to hold the nutrients in the soil structure and any poorly drained soils are more prone to nitrogen leaching. Lastly, because of geography you may not be able to apply anhydrous in the fall. We recommend that if you are near or south of IL Route 16 that you wait and apply anhydrous in the spring.

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NITROGEN DO'S & DON'T'S

DO	DO	DO	DO
ONLY fall apply anhydrous after the maximum 4" soil temperature settles at or below 50°.	ONLY fall apply after the 3rd week of October.	ONLY fall apply with a nitrification inhibitor.	Strongly consider fall applications with a split N program.
DON'T	DON'T	DON'T	DON'T
NO winter corn nitrogen applications.	NO nitrogen applications on frozen ground.	NO fall nitrogen on very sandy or poorly drained soils.	NO fall nitrogen if close to or south of IL Route 16.

Chart developed by Matt Montgomery, October 2016