

Change is in the air at the Dairy One Soils Lab

By Janet B. Fallon, CCA - Dairy One Forage & Soils Lab

Someone once said that the only thing constant in life is change. (Actually, it was the 17th century French classical author François de la Rochefoucauld who is attributed with that quote, not that it matters!) We have seen many changes in the last few months. One big change at Dairy One is the recent collaboration with the Cornell Nutrient Analysis Lab. As many have heard by now, last November, Cornell University announced that it will be moving its commercial soil testing and plant tissue analytical services currently conducted through the Cornell Nutrient Analysis Lab (CNAL) to Dairy One Cooperative under a collaboration named Agro-One.

This transition is consistent with Cornell's focus on research and spinning off commercially-viable technologies to the private sector. Freeing up resources previously dedicated to routine soil and plant tissue analytical services will allow Cornell to enhance its research capabilities and focus on the development of innovative and expanded agro-environmental analytical services. Through Agro-One a critical analytical resource will be preserved and enhanced over time.

It is the goal of Agro-One to provide soil and plant tissue testing services that are consistent with how Cornell has performed them in the past, and interpretations based on Cornell's recommendation system will remain in place. Agro-One is currently getting geared up to provide a Morgan analysis, as done by CNAL, in addition to the current Mehlich 3 & Modified Morgan services.

Dairy One uses a variety of industry-leading quality control measures in all of its laboratory operations. Specifically, Agro-One will follow quality control guidelines developed cooperatively with Cornell and also work within the framework of the Soil Science Society of America's North American Proficiency Testing (NAPT) program.

Agro-One plans to be ready to accept Cornell samples by late spring of 2009. For now, continue to send pre-paid Cornell soil test kits to Cornell as usual. When everything is in place, information will be communicated through the Dairy One Website and Cornell's Field Crop Educators regarding how and where to get new sample kits.

Cornell and Agro-One will provide appropriate options for sample submission and forms consistent with past offerings and stakeholder expectations. The plan is to switch to "pay as you go" Agro-One soil sample kits but Agro-One will continue to accept the pre-paid kits as long as supplies last. Agro-One will simply bill Cornell for the pre-paid samples they receive.

Test results will be available via mail, email, and fax & will be formatted to pull into widely used nutrient management software including Crop Ware. The Cornell recommendations system will be used through Agro-One for the wide variety of crops and soils it has supported in the past. Cornell will maintain and develop the system as it has traditionally done.



**Mark Joyce at the Dairy One Soils Lab
in Ithaca, New York**

Dairy One is also working on a new searchable data base which will allow customers to access historical results as well as current results on line. This will allow them to update crop rotation plans and recommendations as well as monitor soil test levels over time. This is helpful from a management point of view to determine if the fertility program is building, maintaining or depleting soil test levels. Agro-One will collaborate with Cornell on making data accessible to CCE personnel and other customers in an efficient and confidential fashion.

As mentioned above, services currently available from Dairy One will continue as well as a "Cornell Package" that is anticipated to be very similar to current CNAL packages of services. Specific details including pricing are still being figured out but charges will be competitive with similar testing services elsewhere.

Dairy One's current average turn around time for soil tests is four days. This is expected to be the same or better under Agro-One. If non-routine tests are requested turn around time may be affected. Dairy One prides itself on its laboratory turn around times and customer focus. Agro-One also plans to take advantage of the Dairy One transportation network. Customers can utilize this network, where available, to ship their samples over night, currently with no added cost.

There are many other issues under discussion. For example, the Cornell Standard, Low Range or High Range pH kits will still be available and details will be forthcoming. Likewise, people will call Agro-One regarding samples and results. Cornell and CEE will remain responsible for questions related to interpretation and recommendations.

One thing is very certain.....change can be difficult but it can be a very good thing too. If nothing ever changed, we would still be living in caves I suppose! Cornell is moving away from routine soil and tissue testing, and will focus on research, analytical innovations, emerging agro-environmental issues, and special requests. Cornell will offer new analytical services, such as the soil health test, for a limited time until they become viable for commercialization through Agro-One and other labs.

Dairy One is clear in it's mission to create and deliver data and information that will be used to make profit enhancing decisions for the agricultural community. Agro-One will share that mission as the transition from CNAL to Agro-One is complete.

For more questions about Agro-One you can contact - Janet Fallon at 315-696-0167 or by email: janet.fallon@dairyone.com.

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