



# Fertilizing Tips & How to Calibrate that Darn Spreader

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## THANK YOU!

Congratulations and thank you for choosing **RED HEN TURF FARM.**

We hope you find this Guide and our website helpful, and remember, if you EVER have any questions or concerns, give us a call.

**We're here to help!**



## Why Fertilize?

Fertilizing, mowing, and watering are the fundamental lawn care practices. When you fertilize your lawn, you are feeding it the **nutrients** that it needs to maintain its **density** and **vitality**, enhance its **green** color, and encourage **growth** and **recovery** from turf damage and seasonal turf stresses (such as drought periods).

Unfertilized lawns will gradually lose density, allowing undesirable grassy weeds (like crabgrass) and broadleaf weeds (like dandelion and clover) to encroach. In addition, the risk for soil erosion increases.

Lawns that are properly fertilized and treated for problem weeds and pests can more easily tolerate stresses. Applying the right (quality!) products at the correct time (for your particular lawn) helps turf plants accumulate and store the essential plant foods that are used for growth and development.

## N-P-K in a Nutshell

On bags of store-bought Fertilizer, you always see 3 Numbers that represent the N-P-K Rating. Basically, each number is the percentage of N-P-K in the fertilizer. Fertilizers contain N-P-K because they are often needed by plants in larger quantities than most native soils can supply for optimal plant growth.

- **Nitrogen (N)** - N is responsible for strong stem and foliage growth. N is typically associated with green, leafy growth.
- **Phosphorus (P)** - P aids in healthy root growth and flower and seed production. However, there is enough P in most soils to grow healthy turf, especially when grass clippings are left on established lawns.
- **Potassium (K)** - K is responsible for improving overall health and disease resistance.

Most lawn fertilizers are relatively high in N. After all, you want to promote that leafy growth! P and K are also important, but they're needed in smaller quantities. For example, a 50 pound bag of 25-0-10 fertilizer is made up of:

- 25% Nitrogen (N) ... so 12.5 pounds of the bag's contents is Nitrogen
- 0% Phosphorus (P)
- 10% Potassium (K) ... so 5 pounds of the bag's contents is Potassium
- 65% other materials like fillers, carriers, etc. that help improve the flowability of the fertilizer, make the nutrient analysis possible, or condition the fertilizer to have special traits ...

## Why is Red Hen Selling Fertilizer?

The big mass merchandisers have diluted their products so much they no longer deliver the essential nutrients grass plants in the Michiana area need.

Because of these watered down programs, we are getting more problem lawn calls that can be traced back to these insufficient programs.

**The most responsible fertilizer program starts with taking an inexpensive soil test and then tailoring a customized fertilizer program (just for you!) to correct soil nutrient deficiencies. We don't know of anyone else doing this and we want to offer consumers this option and assistance.**

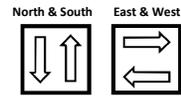
Experts tend to suggest that fertilizing your lawn should be done at specific times during the season. But the reality is that every single lawn has its own unique needs. Instead of consumers reading small print on aisles and aisles of bags, trying to figure out what is best for their lawn, we believe in helping people choose the right fertilizer program for their lawn. Since lawns are not standard 5,000, 10,000 or 15,000 sq. foot sizes, we don't think consumers should have to buy fertilizers that way. You tell us the square feet of your lawn, and we will tell you how much fertilizer to apply.

We think we can offer customers better fertilizing programs at prices less than they are paying at big box stores. To learn more about this topic, check out our handout, "**Fertilizer Program Designed Just For You!**" or give us a call.

## Fertilizing Tips

1. The only way to know if your lawn is deficient of nutrients like phosphorus or potassium is with a soil test. We'll touch on this more a bit later.
2. We recommend using a high-quality, properly calibrated Broadcast Spreader or Rotary Spreader rather than a Drop Spreader.
3. You must calibrate your spreader for each different fertilizer you use, because they do not spread the same amount with the same setting! We'll get into this more a bit later on in this handout.
4. Leave grass clippings on for Nitrogen (N) and H<sub>2</sub>O, as long as they do not smother the grass.
5. **Applying more than 1 pound of actual N per 1000 sq. ft. can burn your lawn.**
6. For shaded areas, reduce the amount of fertilizer by 1/4 per application.

7. Apply fertilizer at half the rate going north and south. Then apply the other half going east and west. Using this pattern to apply fertilizer will help prevent striping.



8. Make one pass around the ends of the section you are spreading, and turn off the spreader each time you get to the end.
9. NEVER stop walking with the spreader open!! Try to walk at a constant speed.
10. Some states have laws requiring that paved surfaces be swept and cleaned after every fertilizer application. While Indiana does NOT have any such laws, spilled fertilizer can harm your grass. Spilled fertilizer can also end up being washed away by rain, ending up in our streams, rivers and lakes and reacting as a harmful pollutant. Always fill your spreader on a solid surface so you can easily sweep up spills.

### **It's Not Just Fertilizer**

Fertilizer is only one piece of the puzzle when it comes to accomplishing a beautiful, healthy lawn.

There are many types of grasses that might not have the best attributes. Some grasses just don't hold up very well to heat, drought and disease. Red Hen Turf Farm strives to provide the best blends of seed and sod on the market.

Many other lawn problems can be attributed to, but are not limited to:

- Proper mowing height.
- Watering the correct amount and time of day.
- Amount of sunlight and air movement.
- Not having your soil tested to determine the optimal levels of nutrients to apply.

### **To Soil Test or Not, That is the Question!**

- A soil test of your lawn is a key step, especially if you are particular about your lawn or have grass problems.
- Soil testing is an environmentally responsible practice. Applying fertilizer or other nutrient sources incorrectly can lead to nitrate or phosphorus contamination of our water resources.
- Soil testing is economically prudent. Why buy nutrients that your soil may not even need, when an inexpensive soil test can provide the information we need to help you adjust your fertilizer program so you are investing in the nutrients that will result in a beautiful, healthy lawn?
- We recommend that you do a soil test every 3 years. If you use our soil testing procedures, we'll provide you with a kit that you'll mail to a certified lab. The postage and payment to the lab will end up costing you under \$15 for a single sample. The results are sent to us and we will translate them into layman's terms and work with you to make design your fertilizer program based on your lawn's unique nutritional needs. Call today for more info.

## Spreader Calibration (Without Using Math!)

Here's a frequent question we get: **"What setting should I put my spreader on?"**

The answer seems like it should be simple enough, **but it turns out that regardless of the spreader type or model you use, each individual spreader is slightly different from all others.** You'll need to calibrate each spreader separately, even though it may appear identical to another spreader. You should also calibrate your spreader for each granular product that you use because products vary in density, size, active ingredient, and nutrient content.

1. Fertilizer applications are based on a certain **number of pounds of fertilizer for every 1000/sq. ft.** So, begin by measuring an area of lawn 1000 sq. ft. The area could be 20 ft. X 50 ft. or anything that equals 1000 sq. ft.
2. Refer to the fertilizer bag or your customized fertilizer program to see how many **pounds of fertilizer to apply per 1000 sq. ft.**
  - ⇒ **For this example, let's say that the fertilizer program designed for you by Red Hen Turf Farm recommends using 4 lbs. of fertilizer per 1000 sq. ft.**
3. Use a scale to measure out the number of **pounds of fertilizer to apply per 1000 sq. ft.** (from Step 2). Measure out a little more fertilizer than you need to make sure it keeps flowing accurately as you get down near the bottom.
  - ⇒ **For our example, you'd want to measure 4 lbs. plus 1 extra lb., for a total of 5 lbs.**
4. Place the measured amount into your spreader and begin walking the test area. Your spreader instructions may include approximate spreader openings and application amounts. Fertilizer bags also typically list settings for popular spreaders. If none of these apply, choose a setting on your spreader that opens it about 1/4.
5. Make your first pass in your trail area.
6. Make your second pass close enough so you can see a few bits of fertilizer fall on your foot prints of your first pass.
7. When you've finished spreading the fertilizer over the 1000 sq. ft., measure how much you have left.
  - ⇒ **If you have only the extra 1 lb. left**, CONGRATULATIONS! Your spreader is calibrated accurately.
  - ⇒ **If you have less than the extra 1 lb. left**, you are using too much and the spreader openings need to be closed more.
  - ⇒ **If you have more than the extra 1 lb. left**, you are using too little and the spreader openings need to be opened a little more.
  - ⇒ You may need to repeat the test if it was way off the mark. Don't test over the same area, however. Applying more than 1 pound of actual N per 1000 sq. ft. can burn your lawn.



*"Fertilizing Tips & How to Calibrate that Darn Spreader" Last Revised: 1/14/14*

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