

Kangaroo Island soil health report: results from 2011-2012 soil tests

Many Kangaroo Island farmers regularly test the soil in their paddocks to monitor changes in soil fertility and pH. The Kingscote PIRSA office in conjunction with Agriculture Kangaroo Island offers a soil testing service for producers, currently funded through a Caring for Our Country Community Grant. The data collected from this program is added continually to a database of soil test results going back into the 1980s. Through this record keeping, trends and long-term changes in a number of essential soil health parameters are ascertained.

The 2011–2012 soil tests carried out by Kangaroo Island farmers indicate that overall, soils in the area are in good health related to the amounts of organic carbon, potassium and salinity they contain. However, results vary depending on soil type and location on the Island.

Soil phosphorus levels were low in the predominantly ironstone soil hundreds and sulphur levels were also low on some properties with sandy soils. In the majority of the Hundreds pH_(CaCl) content in soil was below critical values. This correlates strongly with other soil acidity monitoring work carried out on KI. In many instances the low phosphorus, sulphur and pH levels would be limiting overall farm productivity. However, as soil types vary within each Hundred, care must be taken in the broader interpretation of these findings.

Soil testing is an important tool for landholders to monitor soil fertility levels and it provides valuable information for making correct fertiliser and liming decisions. Paddocks should be soil tested during the summer months. Call into the PIRSA office, Dauncey Street, Kingscote to get a soil test kit.

Natural Resources Kangaroo Island is proud to support the soil testing program.

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