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**FRIDAY, OCT. 6, 2017**

**CONTACT:** *David Hardy, Soil Testing Section chief*  
*NCDA & CS Agronomic Services Division*  
*919-733-2655*

## **Users reminded peak-season soil testing fees go into effect Dec. 1**

*Sample and submit now to avoid fees*

RALEIGH -- Fall is not only a great time of year for football, pumpkin spice and changing leaves, it is also an excellent time to take soil samples for testing through the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Agronomic Services Lab.

By submitting samples before Dec. 1, users can avoid peak-season fees and get results back quickly.

The peak-season testing fee will be in effect through March 31, 2018. During this time period, the cost of soil testing is \$4 per sample. The fee originated in 2013 to encourage earlier sampling in the fall, one of the busiest times of the year for the lab.

Outside of the peak season, soil testing is free to growers. Samples with completed soil sample information forms must be delivered and received by the Agronomic Services Division prior to Dec. 1 to avoid the fee. Samples will not be accepted without completed paperwork.

“The agricultural industry is very much aware of the peak-season fee now, and it has been successful,” said Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler. “With people submitting their samples earlier, it has helped reduce turnaround time for test results. In addition, our lab has been able to improve efficiency by using fees to add robotic equipment and hire temporary personnel during the busy season.”

Last year the soil testing lab’s longest turnaround time was nine weeks, which occurred on Dec. 1 after the start of the fee period. Turnaround time was down to two weeks by the third week of January. Up-to-date turnaround times can always be found at [www.ncagr.gov/agronomi/PALS/](http://www.ncagr.gov/agronomi/PALS/).

Access to the Eaddy Building for sample drop-off is limited so growers need to keep this in mind. This year the gate will be closed during the Thanksgiving holiday period — Wednesday, Nov. 22, at 5 p.m. through Monday, Nov. 27, at 6 a.m. During the fee period, sample drop-off times will be between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. Monday through Friday. There will be no after-hours drop-off of samples during peak season.

Growers are encouraged to submit sample information forms online. Starting Dec. 1, they can also pay peak-season fees with a credit card using a secure online payment service called PayPoint. Online submission can be accessed through the PALS homepage at [www.ncagr.gov/agronomi/PALS/](http://www.ncagr.gov/agronomi/PALS/) after a user account is established under the Utility link.

If faster turnaround time is needed, the lab offers an expedited soil testing service on a limited basis. Growers can purchase expedited shippers, which can hold up to 36 soil samples, for \$200 each while supplies last. The service guarantees a seven-business-day turnaround time if the lab is contacted and notified 24 hours in advance of the quantity being delivered. Otherwise, the guaranteed turnaround time of two weeks upon delivery at the lab is offered. These guarantees exclude the Christmas season. Unused expedited shippers can be used in following years.

Contact the Agronomic Services Division at 919-733-2655 for questions regarding the peak-season soil testing fee, online sample submission or the purchase of expedited shippers.