

# Calibrating Your Fertilizer Spreader



## A properly calibrated fertilizer spreader:

- Prevents product waste
- Prevents excess product from getting into the watershed and creating pollution
- Ensures a healthy lawn.

Before you apply a product, have your soil analyzed at the Clemson Extension office for your county.

## Did You Know?

- Knowing your lawn's nutritional needs will help you purchase the right type of product with the right concentrations of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium.
- Begin by determining the total square footage lawn you need to treat.
- Use this simple formula to determine the application rate of each fertilizer:  $100 \div \text{\% nitrogen}$  (nitrogen is the first component indicated by the three numbers on the fertilizer bag) = the amount of fertilizer to spread over 1,000 square feet.
- Therefore,  $100 \div 16 = 6.25$  pounds of fertilizer per 1,000 square feet.  $6.25/1000 \times 5,000$  square foot lawn = 31.25 pounds of fertilizer.
- A 40 pound bag of fertilizer will be all that you need to buy to fertilize a 5,000 square foot lawn.
- Once you know the concentrations needed by your yard, you will need to calculate how much product your spreader dispenses.
- You do this by using a particular number of square feet of lawn and test spreading your product.

## Calibration

- Because granular products come in many different particle sizes and densities, the speed you walk, spreader condition, texture of ground and other factors, there is no way to determine a universal pounds per thousand spreader setting.
- One simple solution is to do a 50' by 20' test. The 50 x 20 rule will allow you to determine appropriate pounds per thousand rates for any product in any spreader. Weigh out and place enough material in the hopper to cover 1,000 sq. ft.
- Place the spreader setting on a low setting about 1/4 of the way open.
- Apply the weighed material over a 50 x 20 ft. area (This is 1,000 sq. ft.).
- If material is left over, you are under applying, and will need to increase the setting accordingly; before applying to the remainder of the lawn.
- If you come up short, you are over applying and you will need to decrease the setting; before applying to the remainder of the lawn.

**General Note:** As with any application of materials, it is best to know your soil pH. Test your soil yearly to make sure you aren't duplicating products (too much nitrogen can be just as detrimental as too little nitrogen). Always WATER fertilizer after application.