



Can a foliar really pay this year?

7/3/2019

Now that crops have emerged and are growing rapidly, a fair question to consider is - can a foliar fertilizer application, including **SP-1™**, improve yield potential?

Yes! Especially, when using organic fertilizers on alfalfa. We've witnessed how a foliar application, that included **SP-1™**, improved nutrient uptake on an alfalfa/grass hay field during a trial in Minnesota:

- Control (no foliar fertilizer) – RFV (Relative Feed Value) of 101
- With 3 gal/acre Damm fish – RFV of 163
- With **SP-1™** added to the Damm fish – RFV of 181

These numbers tell us two things:

1. A small amount of fertilizer foliarly applied can make a significant difference.
2. The inclusion of **SP-1™** made the fertilizer even more effective.

The reason for that is many of the foliar fertilizer products we use, such as fish, are not completely plant available, but when broken down microbially virtually all of their nutrients can be absorbed through the leaf's tissues. This is particularly true of nutrients like the fine calcium/phosphorus particles that are suspended in some fish products.

Some tend to think of applying a foliar only in terms of feeding the plant more nutrients and overlook the important role microbiology can play. We encourage you to think about the microbiology that is always, for better or for

worse, present on the surfaces of the plant. Because, as we see from the example above, your plants may not have the organisms resident on their leaves to get the most out of foliar fertilizer.

You may not grow alfalfa, and as impressive as turning low-quality hay into high-quality with a single foliar is, you might feel this information has no use to you. Perhaps not.

On the other hand, this planting season has been historically exceptional for many Midwestern growers. Between late plantings and planting into marginal conditions, this could be the year where an early season foliar, including micronutrients, could pay.

Crops planted into wet soils often have confined and under-developed roots systems. As such, they become a relatively poor feeder. If this describes your situation, an early foliar, including micronutrients, could help your crops burst through some of the limitations nature placed on it this year.

Even if you don't include a good slow release fertilizer like fish, **SP-1™** still has a place. It makes synthetic fertilizers release more smoothly by buffering them. In other words, some of the applied nutrients get absorbed by the organisms in **SP-1™** very quickly and then release over a longer period of time. That avoids any shock to the plant's system and allows the plant to use the added nutrients at a rate it deems best.

Put another way, including **SP-1™** increases the odds that these types of foliar fertilizer applications will be effective and profitable over a wider range of environmental conditions at the time they are sprayed. Products that are a little too salty, a little too acid, or contain a bit too much ammonium are buffered, or "safened", by **SP-1™**.

Call your rep today!