

MOST GROWERS REALISE THEY NEED ANNUAL APPLICATIONS OF LIME.

“ Calcium is a very important input to lift the pH of the soils and maximise the other nutrients. ”

ANDREW HENNOSTE

AGRONOMIST, GRANITE BELT, QUEENSLAND



At a glance

Location	Granite Belt, Queensland
Crop	Apple orchards
Product	AgLime

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CALCIUM IS VITAL TO THE SUCCESS OF GRANITE BELT APPLE ORCHARDS

It is said that an apple a day keeps the doctor away, but apples require nutrition too, and as agronomist Andrew Hennoste explains, that comes in the form of agricultural lime.

Hennoste, from Elders Stanthorpe, has seen the regular application of calcium through agricultural lime help lift the pH of soils and contribute to the success of apple orchards in the Granite Belt, Southern Queensland.

“A pH of 6.5 allows more nutrients in the soil to be available to the plant, so getting to that level and trying to maintain it is the key,” explains Hennoste. “The nature of our soils here [in Granite Belt] means the level of calcium will drop away without regular applications.”

“Keeping soils at this pH level [6.5 or above] also helped prevent bitter pit.”

Calcium as agricultural lime

Hennoste conducted soil tests in orchards and used lime to lift the pH to 6.5 or above. Keeping soils at this pH level also helped prevent bitter pit, a disorder that can occur with low levels of calcium in the fruit.

He applies calcium as agricultural lime when apple trees are dormant in July and August. The lime is broadcast and gradually works its way into the subsoil with the assistance of rain or irrigation across the season.

“By the time the season hits, the lime is doing its job,” Hennoste says. “The particle size of the lime is reasonably fine and easy to spread and the neutralising value of the lime is used to determine the amount needed to lift the pH of the soil.”

Additional calcium can also be added through the irrigation system as a supplementary option and is designed to aid fruit set.

Hydrated lime for apple storage

Hennoste says most growers realise they need annual application of lime and soil tests determine how much to put on, but hydrated lime is also used by growers at the end of the season to assist in the storage of apples in the cold rooms.

“As the fruit starts to respire it gives off CO₂. Hydrated lime extracts the CO₂ out of the room and the lime converts back to its original form.”

Seems that the goodness in apples certainly starts from the ground up.

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- ▶ Promotes healthy soil structure and root development needed for pasture growth.
- ▶ Helps balance soil condition, ensuring fertiliser applications are fully utilised.
- ▶ Promotes increased dry matter production.
- ▶ Maintaining soil pH helps prevent bitter pit.



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