

# SOIL FERTILITY SERVICES LTD

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## ROOTING IT OUT!!

with Robert Plumb

Soil Audit and Nutrient Management

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# The Royal Show!



Above: I went along on the first day (Thursday 3rd July 2008) and was very disappointed - SPOT THE FARMER!

**Do we need one? The Welsh have the Royal Welsh Show which is an excellent, well supported shop window for all things country - agriculture and Welsh. The Scots have the Royal Highland Show, a wonderful opportunity to forum Scottish agriculture and all things to do with this great nation. These two countries also support local country shows and love their agriculture and countryside pursuits.**

So what the heck is the matter with The Royal Show, Warwickshire? As a company we used to exhibit there every year until a couple of years ago. I went along on Thursday (the first day) to have another look if we should return next year. I'm sure that a lot of you like me, have fond memories of The Royal when it was a great show. Well I was really disappointed. No atmosphere, very little livestock (I know the Blue Tongue menace meant it had to be curtailed, but I wonder how many there would have been.) - so empty sheds, empty rings and empty hospitality suites - no fun at all!

I went around the agriculture area, a few stalwarts were still showing there and talking to them, they were at least optimistic that they would meet some farmers and do a bit of business (out of sympathy probably). A few local dealers were also there with some shiny new kit - well done them - BUT IT WAS BORING! Lots of empty spaces, a massive English Nature area - for what? Who pays for their stand? I asked them and got a rebuff "it is important for us to be here" I was told. They are a bloody disgrace to you, misrepresenting just what English agriculture is all about. They have some really pathetic crops of barley, oats etc and acres of grassland, wild flowers etc and one Pratt said to me: "we are saving the countryside". From what? I asked, the countryside and the views have always been here and in my opinion managed a lot better without the educated idiots getting in the way.



The 'missus' was with me and reckoned the shopping was "wonderful" - because no-one was there it wasn't too bad to get around, and there were some really nice stands with good quality produce - but no customers!!! I had a look around the 'car area' as we needed to buy a couple of new vehicles, but this was pretty pathetic too and I found nothing.

In the International pavilion - it was empty! A few stands and one or two interesting but mostly university type stuff. Who are they really selling to? One stand was called 'All for One Medicine' and I read their boards as I was intrigued by the name. It was in university talk - gobble-le-gook, so I challenged the educated Archie on duty, she did not understand why I couldn't comprehend what they were offering, so she called over her supervisor. **OH DEAR! HERE WE GO AGAIN, MR PLUMB GETTING IN DEEP NOW, NEVER MIND, IN I GO** (as usual). "Why the heck don't you people just speak in plain English?" I asked, and it turns out they are after money, "for what" I asked, "research why Doctors and Vets don't talk to each other!". I said I would much rather go to a good Vet any day than a Doctor. I told them the problem with all health issues (humans, animals and soils) is the lack of essential minerals of which selenium is the most important of all of them (in terms of health and the immune system). We are not getting it in our diet and most people would benefit from a selenium supplement - **FANTASTIC**, she agreed with me!!

I met a Norfolk farmer I had not seen for 15 years, (I hope I haven't aged as much as he has!) and he was really upset. No atmosphere, no stock, no agriculture! He was going home and next year will stick with The Royal Norfolk Show.

### SO WHATS TO DO ABOUT IT?

My view is, we do need a National shop window for UK agriculture and The Royal Show should be it. The International market is important to us all, both buyers and sellers need to be represented but it is embarrassing right now as it does not show UK agriculture in its real light.

The Royal Show must get it's act together and for a year at least, invite the companies that USED to show there, like us (and many others) to action a meeting with a plan to get us all back there - give us all enough 'free' tickets to invite our customers and promote the show afresh with the top stock competitors (as it used to be). I don't think it will happen, but I have written to them, if you're in agreement, the more letters they receive might make them think.

## PHOSPHATE

Fertilisers continue to go up and we just don't know where it will end. I can understand some of the increase on nitrogen as it is strictly dependent on oil/gas and for the time being I only see this continuing to go UP.

Phosphate and potash are different stories; phosphate is mined around the world and although true stocks are diminishing, it is not at an alarming rate with 23,000,000 tonnes in North Africa (where most of ours comes from) output per annum is around 30,000 tonnes, so looks like another 50 years or so and plenty more in other areas of the world. It is supply and demand that is driving the price and for the time being they can get pretty much what they ask for it. Good job you don't need it!!