

Media Release

November 29, 2010

KNOW YOUR WELL

If you live in a rural area, chances are your family's daily water supply comes from a well on your property. Get acquainted with your well; know the type and its location. It's the first step in doing everything you can to protect the water your family drinks. *When it comes to wells, think watertight!* You need to properly maintain your well to prevent it from being damaged or contaminated. Just because your water does not smell or taste unusual it does not mean that it is bacteriologically safe to drink. In a properly constructed and maintained well, contaminants or foreign materials such as surface water and vermin should not be found. Surface and rain water can be common sources of contaminants in wells.

Could your Water Supply be Contaminated?

The most common types of susceptible water supplies that may become contaminated are:

- Below-grade wells. This is where the top of the well casing is buried below ground level, examples include well pits and buried wells.
- Wells located in shallow soils and fractured rock.
- Cisterns, which are reservoirs used to collect and store rain water.
- Shore wells are not a safe source of water and should be treated prior to consumption.

Know What's in Your Well Water!

Testing your well water for bacterial contamination is a smart way to monitor its quality. Wells should be tested at least twice a year preferably spring and fall and additionally after times of heavy rain. **This fall has been particularly wet and it is therefore an important time to sample your well water.**

Sample bottles and the testing are provided free of charge to homeowners with private wells at any of our Health Unit offices located in Smiths Falls, Brockville, Kemptville and Gananoque. Sample bottles are also available at the following municipal offices: Athens, Beckwith, Drummond/North Elmsley, Edwardsburg/Cardinal, Elizabethtown/Kitley, Lanark Highlands, Leeds and the 1000 Islands, Merrickville-Wolford, Mississippi Mills, Montague, Rideau Lakes, Tay Valley and Westport. Water samples bottles must be returned to any health unit office from Monday to Thursday. Water testing takes place at our public health laboratories in Kingston and Ottawa. For specific office information and hours please visit our website at www.healthunit.org.

If you suspect that your water may be bacteriologically unsafe for drinking, we recommend using an alternate safe source of water until you have **3 consecutive satisfactory samples** taken a week apart. This can confirm the safety of your well water.

If you require help interpreting your water sample result, please feel free to visit our website at www.healthunit.org or call the Health ACTION Line at 1-800-660-5853 or 613-345-5685 to speak with a Public Health Inspector.