

Rural Drinking Water Safety

Water is vital to everyone's existence. You may be able to survive without food for more than a month, but eliminate water and you will perish in a much shorter time period. Every product, whether created by man or nature, requires water. Consider the amount of life-giving water that is required by a cow to produce milk each day or the amount of water required to produce a bushel of corn (or tomatoes, beans, wheat, barley, etc.). Thirty-eight percent of the water usage in the United States goes for residential consumption with the largest demand going for toilet flushing. The average American uses 100 gallons of water each day. Americans drink more than one billion gallons of tap water a day.

Conservation of water is important. Here are a few tips to help prevent water waste.

- Economize by making a conscience effort to use only what is needed.
- Repair leaks. Five percent of water usage is due to leaks.
- Install water devices. Aerators, flow regulators and displacement devices are simple ways to reduce water usage.
- Reuse water. For example, water plants with dehumidifier water or from a rain barrel.

Groundwater is where much of our drinking water comes from. Groundwater is water pumped from the ground for domestic, industrial, and agricultural use. The environment and economy depend on this clean supply of water. Groundwater supplies 90% of the drinking water for rural America and 34% of agriculture production water needs, most of which is used for irrigation.

Often there is concern for the water supply in rural areas. There are tests to determine the bacteria and nitrate levels but these are sophisticated and expensive. Local health agencies and extension educators can assist in obtaining water analysis. Contaminated groundwater can be restored but it is time-consuming and expensive. It is far better to prevent contamination in the first place by monitoring land use, minimizing contamination of well water, using environmentally friendly materials, and disposing of chemicals and containers properly.



Instruct youth to use water properly by:

- Using only the water needed for the job. If watering livestock, fill container without letting container overflow.
- Disposing of household products and chemicals correctly.
- Limit the use of pesticides and fertilizers to what is needed. Youth can remind parents to do the same.
- Identify and fix water leaks with a parent.

Rural America depends on water for its much needed bounty. Help keep this vital resource safe for the next generation.

Farm Safety

