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Private water well screening set for October 16 in Chambers and Jefferson Counties

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COLLEGE STATION — Private water well owners whose wells flooded from the recent rains should assume their well water is contaminated until screened, according to Dr. Diane Boellstorff, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service water resource specialist, College Station. The [Texas Well Owner Network](#) is hosting a water well screening in October in Chambers and Jefferson Counties to give area residents the opportunity to have their well water screened.

“You should not use water from a flooded well for drinking, cooking, making ice, or brushing your teeth until you are satisfied it is not contaminated,” Boellstorff said.

Boellstorff, who is in Texas A&M University’s soil and crop sciences department, said floodwater may contain substances from upstream, such as manure, sewage from flooded septic systems or wastewater treatment plants or other contaminants. A septic system near a well also can cause contamination when the soil is flooded.

Each screening event will be from 8:30-10 a.m. Dates and locations for the screenings as well as date, time and location for follow-up are:

- Oct. 16 at the AgriLife Extension office for Chambers County, 295 White Memorial Park Road, Anahuac. A meeting explaining screening results will be at 5:30 p.m. Oct. 17 at the J.P. Precinct 1 Courtroom, 211 Broadway Ave., Winnie, Texas 77665.
- Oct. 16 at the AgriLife Extension office for Jefferson County, 1225 Pearl Street, Suite 200, Beaumont. A meeting explaining screening results will be at 5:30 p.m. Oct. 17 at the J.P. Precinct 1 Courtroom, 211 Broadway Ave., Winnie, Texas 77665.
- Oct. 16 at the Chambers County Commissioner Precinct 1 Office, 211 Broadway, Winnie. A meeting explaining screening results will be at 5:30 p.m. Oct. 17 at J.P. Precinct 1 Courtroom, 211 Broadway Ave., Winnie, Texas 77665.
- Oct. 16 at the Jefferson County J.P. Precinct 4 Office, 19217 FM 365, Beaumont. A meeting explaining screening results will be at 5:30 p.m. Oct. 17 at J.P. Precinct 1 Courtroom, 211 Broadway Ave., Winnie, Texas 77665.

Joel Pigg, AgriLife Extension program specialist, College Station, said area residents wanting to have their well water screened should pick up a sample bag, bottle and instructions from the AgriLife Extension office in Chambers County or Jefferson County.

“It is very important that only sampling bags and bottles from the AgriLife Extension office be used and all instructions for proper sampling are followed to ensure accurate results,” Pigg said.

The samples must be turned in by 10 a.m. on the day of the screening and there will be no charge for the analyses.

Samples will be screened for contaminants including total coliform bacteria, E. coli, nitrate-nitrogen and salinity.

Pigg said research shows the presence of E. coli bacteria in water indicates that waste from humans or warm-blooded animals may have contaminated the water. Water contaminated with E. coli is more likely to also have pathogens present that can cause diarrhea, cramps, nausea or other symptoms.

“Water with nitrate-nitrogen at levels of 10 parts per million is considered unsafe for human consumption,” Pigg said. “These nitrate levels above 10 parts per million can disrupt the ability of blood to carry oxygen throughout the body, resulting in a condition called methemoglobinemia. Infants less than 6 months of age and young livestock are most susceptible.”

Salinity as measured by total dissolved solids will also be determined for each sample, he said. Water with high levels may leave deposits and have a salty taste, and using water with high levels for irrigation may damage soil or plants.

Pigg said it is extremely important for those submitting samples to be at the October 17 meeting to receive results, learn corrective measures for identified problems and improve their understanding of private well management.

Pigg said “After a flood wells should be inspected for physical damage and signs of leakage. If it appears damaged, consult a licensed water well contractor to determine whether repairs are needed.”

He also noted flooding can damage the well pump and electrical systems.

“If the pump and/or electrical system has been underwater and it is not designed to be under water, do not turn on the pump as there is a potential for electrical shock or damage to your well or pump,” he said.

Pigg said once floodwaters have receded and pump and electrical system have dried, have a qualified electrician, well driller or pump installer check the wiring system and other well components.

For more information, please contact the AgriLife Extension office in Chambers County at 409-374-2123 or Jefferson County at 409-835-8461.

To learn more about the programs offered through the network or to find additional publications and resources, please visit <http://twon.tamu.edu>.

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