

Manure Spills in Private Wells

Wells contaminated with manure pose a serious health risk.

Private wells near areas where manure is spread, stacked, or stored can become contaminated with manure, particularly after heavy rains. Manure contains germs that can make people sick. Infants, young children, and people with a weak immune system are most at risk.

If your well water smells like manure or water is brown or yellow, follow these steps:



Use a different water source for drinking, preparing food, washing hands, and bathing until your water is no longer affected.

Options for different water include:



Bottled water



Water from a well without issues



Water from a public system



Throw out ice and drinks made with the water.



Wash dishes carefully. Use your dishwasher's heated dry or sanitize cycle or wash by hand.*



Inform the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) of the situation. Contact the [private well specialist](#) for your county or use the [DNR hotline](#).*



DNR will investigate whether the contamination is caused by a manure spill.* This investigation may include staff visiting your home, asking you to test your water for bacteria, or taking samples themselves. If manure is the cause of the contamination, DNR may provide you with a temporary supply of bottled water.

Talk to your health care provider if you or a family member have symptoms that may be related to your water.



Address the contamination source.

If manure is the cause, DNR will work with you to find a solution. If manure is not the cause, you should still take steps to address the contamination.*

* = Additional information is available in the *Resource Guide* (next page).



★ Resource Guide ★



Follow the instructions in our *Cleaning with Bleach* guide to **sanitize dishes**: www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p00631d.pdf



The contact information for the regional private well specialists is available at dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Wells/PrivateWaterSupply.html. You can also call or text DNR's Violation Hotline at 800-847-9367 or submit a report at dnr.wisconsin.gov/contact/Hotline.html.



The DNR has information about manure spill investigations and the temporary bottled water process at dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/DrinkingWater/manure.html.



If you are asked to test your own water, you should use a **lab** certified by the DNR. You can find a list of certified labs at <https://apps.dnr.wi.gov/dwsportalpub/BactiLab>.



If manure is not the source of the bacteria contamination, our *Bacteria in Private Wells* fact sheet can help you address the issue: www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p02132.pdf



You should also test for arsenic, bacteria, and nitrate regularly.

You can find information on these and other substances to consider testing for at www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/water/private.htm.

You can find all this information and more at www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/water/manure.htm

Questions? Concerns?

Contact us at
DHSEnvHealth@wi.gov
or 608-266-1120.