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TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Water Well Basics

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Texas landowners are responsible for managing the drinking water from their private wells. To protect your water supply, you need to keep records on each well, manage potential sources of contamination, and test your water at least once a year.

Keep records

Record the location of all wells on your property, and keep a file on each well. Each well will have a unique identification number assigned by the driller. Use this number to track historical information, which may be available from the following sources:

- **Texas Water Development Board Groundwater Database:** Registered water-well drillers must submit reports to the state for each well they drill. More than 130,000 wells have been recorded in the TWDB groundwater database since 2001. Your well may be listed at http://wiid.twdb.state.tx.us/ims/wwm_drl/viewer.htm.
- **Texas Commission on Environmental Quality Water Well Report:** www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/WaterWellReportViewer, (512) 239-0900 or wras@tceq.texas.gov.
- **Texas Alliance for Groundwater Districts:** http://www.texasgroundwater.org/. Your groundwater may be managed and protected locally through a groundwater conservation district. Groundwater districts are governed under chapters 35 and 36 of the Texas Water Code.
- **Texas Water Development Board:** http://www.twdb.state.tx.us/groundwater/conservation_districts/index.asp

Manage potential sources of contamination

Materials from many common facilities can contaminate a water well. Take steps to protect your well water from them. According to Texas law, the wellhead must be at least:

- **50 feet** from any septic tank, cistern, property boundary, and/or nonpotable well
- **100 feet** from your septic drainfield or any leach field
- **150 feet** from any feed storage area, pesticide or fertilizer storage area, or shelter or yard for pets or livestock.
- **250 feet** from a manure stack or liquid waste disposal system

Test the water

Contaminants such as arsenic and radionuclides can occur naturally in wells. Well water can also be contaminated by environmental disturbances or human activities such as oil and gas exploration.

Have your well water tested for the contaminants that are most likely to be in it. At a minimum, have the water tested **every year** for nitrate, total dissolved solids (TDS), and *E. coli* or fecal coliform (bacteria from human or animal waste).

Also have the water tested whenever you suspect contamination; when you notice a change in the water's color, taste, or odor; after the pump or well is maintained; and after anyone who drinks the well water experiences a suspicious illness.

To find a laboratory, call your county health department or choose a certified drinking water laboratory from the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program at http://www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/certified_labs.

For more information

- Texas Well Owner Network: http://twon.tamu.edu/
- List of licensed well driller/pump installers: http://www.license.state.tx.us/LicenseSearch/
- Texas Groundwater Protection Committee: http://www.tgpc.state.tx.us/WaterWells.php
- County AgriLife Extension office: http://counties.agrilife.org/
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