



## Monitor Your Well if You Live Near a CAFO or the Manure-Spread Fields

If you live near a concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO) or the fields where manure is spread, you should be vigilant in having your well water tested.

Rain water and snow melt carry manure from the spread fields into the ground where it can enter your drinking water. Furthermore, CAFO waste pits can develop cracks that allow seeping into ground water. Nobody has responsibility for testing the ground water near a CAFO to determine if it has developed leaks. And nobody regularly inspects fields to ensure that the manure spread on them stays on the field and does not leach into your well water.

Once manure enters your well, your drinking water can become contaminated with bacteria and nitrates. Play it safe and have your water tested every year for nitrates and bacteria. The Environmental Protection Agency also recommends that you have the water tested for total dissolved solids and pH levels. Contact your county public health department to determine where to take your water for testing.

Bacteria and nitrates can cause illnesses. Nitrates can result in blue baby syndrome in infants, which can lead to death or serious health issues. Additionally nitrates have been implicated in cancer in adults.<sup>1</sup> Nitrates also are endocrine disruptors, which means that they act like a hormone in the human body.<sup>2</sup>

If your well is contaminated, find an alternate source of drinking water as soon as possible.

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<sup>1</sup> Aarhus University. "Nitrate in drinking water increases the risk of colorectal cancer, study finds." Science Daily, February 20, 2018.

[www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/02/180220095019.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/02/180220095019.htm)

and

Jörg Schullehner, Birgitte Hansen, Malene Thygesen, Carsten B. Pedersen, Torben Sigsgaard. "Nitrate in drinking water and colorectal cancer risk: A nationwide population-based cohort study", *International Journal of Cancer*, 2018; DOI: 10.1002/ijc.31306

and

Mary H Ward, Rena R. Jones, Jean D. Brender, Theo M. de Kok, Peter J. Weyer, Bernard T. Nolan B, Christina M. Villanueva, Simone G van Breda, "Drinking Water Nitrate and Human Health: An Updated Review", *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, July 23, 2018

<sup>2</sup> Fact Sheet – Nitrate Removal Facility, Des Moines Water Works.