Well Water

Testing Private Well Water

Private well water supplies should be tested annually for nitrate and coliform bacteria. Test more frequently if a problem is suspected. List of testing laboratories may be available from your local health department. The laboratory supplies instructions and sample bottles, which may contain preservatives. The water sample is usually collected at the tap and either delivered or mailed to the laboratory. Laboratories mail back the sample results. Nitrate at levels above the national standard poses an immediate threat to young children and boiling water contaminated with nitrates actually increases the nitrate concentration and potential risks.

Septic

Wastewater- a Human Water Cycle

Whether you flush it, pour it, or dump it down the drain, whatever you put into your sewage system doesn't go away. We treat wastewater in order to protect ground water quality, but keeping pollutants out of our sewage systems is even more important. A sewage system is designed for sewage, not food, garbage or other materials.

On-Site Septic Systems

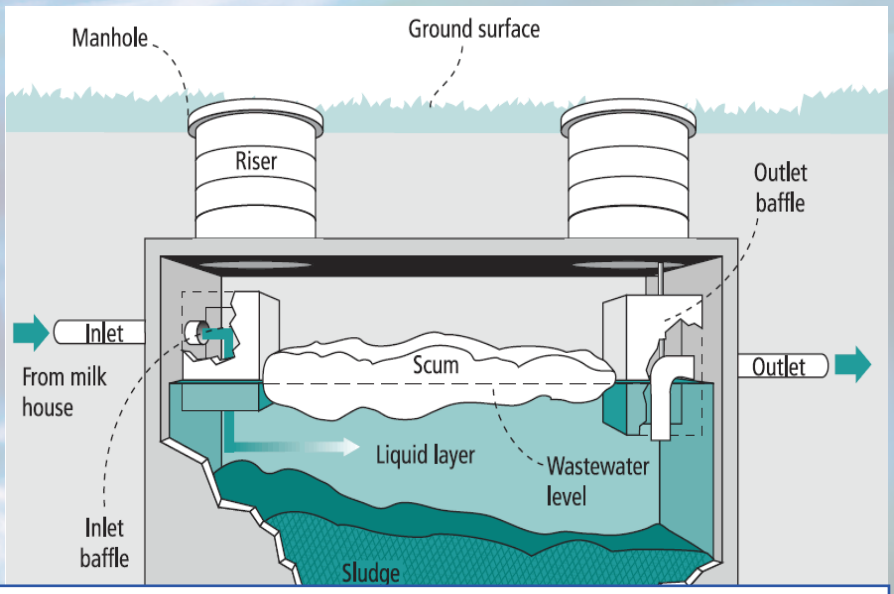
A septic system is designed to process 3 things on a regular basis: human waste, toilet paper and water from everyday bathing and household uses. In a typical septic system, solid waste (kitchen sink, bathroom sink, shower, toilet, laundry) flows through pipes into a septic holding tank where it is retained until it is periodically removed for disposal at an approved dumping facility. Clarified effluent (liquid from the tank) is discharged from the tank into a soil absorption system and then seeps into soil on the property. In the absorption system, naturally occurring bacteria in the soil digest septic bacteria and other pathogens so the liquid is eventually sanitary and doesn't contaminate the private wells, ponds, or streams. There is some bacterial activity in the holding tank but the most important action occurs in the soil absorption system. A failed system can pollute water and shoreline areas.

Maintain Your Septic Tank

Symptoms of malfunctioning septic systems include odors, soggy sewage erupting at the surface of the yard or stream, or back-up of sewage into toilets or fixtures in the home.

Check your septic tank every 2-3 years and service as needed. To avoid system failure periodic tank pumping is mandatory. Poorly maintained septic tanks no longer protect the soil absorption field from solids because there is less settling time for waste entering the tank and small bits of floating solids are pushed out and begin clogging the soil absorption system. Continued neglect may result in system failure and even replacement of the soil absorption field.

Food waste from a garbage disposal may require that you pump out your system more frequently. Ground up food may also be a source of additional nitrogen which can leak into water bodies and lesson water quality by reducing the amount of dissolved oxygen in the water.



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