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News Release

For Immediate Release

Homeowners urged to test wells annually

Homeowners who rely on wells for drinking water should consider testing their water for bacteria at least once a year. The Springfield-Greene County Health Department conducts these tests for a fee. The service is available to anyone, not just Greene County residents.

Testing a well can give a homeowner peace of mind about the quality of their drinking water – something all of us ingest each day. The days and weeks after this month's record rainfall is a good time to test the wells, because stormwater sometimes carries contaminants that can leach into wells and groundwater.

"It's simply a good annual practice to check your well," said Machellette Petit, senior lab scientist with the department. "Both wet and dry weather can affect water quality, and we've seen plenty of both during the last year in the Ozarks."

Homeowners can pick up a test kit at the Department's main location at the Harold K. Bengsch Building, 227 E. Chestnut Expressway. Samples can be dropped off between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Wednesday, and 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Thursdays, excluding holidays. Instructions for properly taking a sample are found online at <http://health.springfieldmo.gov/water>.

The most common water test conducted by the department is for the presence of E. coli and coliform bacteria. When ingested, E. coli can cause stomach illness such as nausea, vomiting, stomach cramps and diarrhea. Fecal coliforms are bacteria that are associated with human or animal wastes. They usually live in human or animal intestinal tracts, and their presence in drinking water is a strong indication of recent sewage or animal waste contamination.

The department can also test for:

- High levels of sulfate, which is a naturally occurring substance that can have a laxative effect if too much is ingested
- Presence of nitrates, which can be harmful if ingested by infants
- Iron, which can stain laundry and fixtures
- Hardness levels
- Chlorine, which is used to "shock" wells with high bacteria levels, but which can itself be problematic if levels are too high

The cost is \$8 per test, except for the bacteria test, which is \$13.

Well owners can the laboratory at (417) 864-1673 for more information or to request collection supplies.

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