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Is Your WATER SUPPLY SAFE?

By D. C. MICKLE, Dairy Produce Inspector

There can be no doubt in anyone's mind that the need for a clean, safe and adequate water supply is essential for the production of high quality milk and cream. It naturally follows, that, even though every possible care has been taken in an endeavour to produce clean, germ-free milk and cream, contamination by bad water can render these efforts void.

A contaminated water supply has quite often arisen from carelessness or lack of appreciation of just how easy it is for the water supply to become unsafe. Polluted water enters streams, wells and springs and open types of reservoirs through surface run-off and openings from underground channels. Drainage underground from septic tanks, open cess pools, cow yards and abandoned wells or soaks can ruin the purity of your water supply very quickly.

On the dairy farm, nearly all surface water is contaminated, particularly that in close proximity to the dairy buildings and yards. Any underground water within 10 feet of the surface of farm yards can be impure. Especially is this so with wells and springs in limestone country for such type of country commonly has large cracks and fissures through which water can pass rapidly for great distances with very little, if any, filtering action. It is important, therefore, that no cess pools or holes containing farm wastes, including dead animals, be permitted on limestone country. In sandy and loamy soils, water moves more slowly and many impurities are removed. However, even under the best of soil filtration conditions, wells should be situated not less than 100 feet from dairy buildings, yards and septic systems. This is of greater importance if the water is drawn from a shallow well.

In selecting the site for a new well, it is important to remember that it is best it be located up the slope above any possible source of contamination. Dig a good ditch around the well or construct a solid gutter above the well to direct the surface water to at least about 25 feet away from the well opening. Many dairy farmers make use of springs for water supply. Some springs dry up during summer, indicating that their flow is close to the surface, and, hence, open to surface contamination by coliform bacteria. It is essential that the area about the spring be fenced off and then protected from impure surface water drainage and any foreign matter. This can be done by enclosing the spring-head with a strongly built concrete box, with a removable lid for inspection and provided with a pipe outlet for draining off water rather than bucketing it from the supply.

Dams are in common use as a means of water supply on farms and have the advantage over a stream or creek in that drainage into them is more easily controlled, but here again, the first consideration as to site is the protection from drainage from farm yards, dairy buildings and...
sewage disposal areas. Such dams as provide water for farm domestic use as well as dairy premises, must be securely fenced against encroachment by farm animals.

The fact that water tastes and looks good, is not proof that it is pure. The only way to be sure in case of doubt is to have a series of samples taken for bacteriological testing in a laboratory. If it is desired to secure such samples, an application to a laboratory should be made for assistance and instruction of how to secure samples of water in the proper manner.

Finally, remember the important points are:

1. Locate your supply properly.
2. Protect it from surface contamination.
3. Test the water periodically for purity.

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