



## Perform an Annual Well Inspection

**The National Ground Water Association advises farmers to maintain their farm well systems with annual inspections and routine maintenance.**

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Courtesy National Ground Water Association

Check your well cap for cracks and problems with the seal to help eliminate bacteria and other contamination entering the ground water. Nearly 45 out of every 100 Americans use well water in their homes for drinking. As part of Ground Water Awareness Week, March 7 to 14, 2010, the National Ground Water Association is encouraging farmers with wells to perform an annual maintenance check on their system to make sure the water is safe and clean.

A properly functioning well system is especially important for farmers who use the water for growing crops and feeding livestock on the farm.

“Irrigation accounts for the largest use of ground water in the United States,” says Bob Stallman, president of the American Farm Bureau Federation. “Some 58 billion gallons of ground water are used daily for agricultural irrigation from more than 378,082 wells.”

A poorly maintained irrigation well system on the farm could lead to contamination in the aquifer, says Cliff Treyens, the public awareness director at NGWA. This contamination can come from nitrates, bacteria from animals and crop care chemicals.

Trey wrote in his brochure “Eight Tips for Maintaining Your Well,” that 80 percent of private well owners surveyed never had a well-maintenance inspection. The NGWA advises that inspections should be performed by a certified contractor who will check your well system’s water flow and level, pump motor performance, pressure tank and pressure switch contact and water quality.

The contractor should also check for sanitation and ensure that the well equipment meets all local code requirements. Tests can be performed on the water for problems that are local concerns, such as tests for coliform bacteria or nitrates, and for problems related to plumbing such as iron, manganese, water hardness and sulfides. Other tests might be recommended if water appears dirty or has an odor, if bacteria are detected, or if the system isn’t working properly

Performing these checks on an annual basis can save you financial expenses and safety concerns.

Following the inspection, the well owner will receive a report detailing the results of the tests and recommendations for well maintenance. The NGWA recommends well owners take the following steps between inspections to ensure safe and clean ground water:

Maintain proper separation between your well and buildings, waste system and chemical storage areas. Speak with your contractor about local codes regulating these separations.

Keep hazardous materials at least 50 feet from the well. These materials include paint, fertilizer, pesticides, motor oil and waste from livestock and other animals.

Regularly check your well cap for cracks and make sure it’s properly sealed. “A damaged well cap can allow the entry of bacteria or other contamination into the well,” says John Pitz, an NGWA board member. “It’s one of the easiest things to check and a well owner can do it.”

Keep well records in a safe place. These records include the construction report and your well inspection report.

Get your well tested if you notice a change in the taste, odor or appearance of your water, or if the well system is serviced. To have an inspection performed on your well, you can find a contractor in your area at [Wellowner.org](http://Wellowner.org) by clicking on “Finding a Contractor” then “Contractor Lookup.”

“NGWA operates the only national certification for water well drillers and pump installers, who must pass exams and take continuing education courses,” Trey says.



The listing will show whether the contractor is NGWA certified.