

## KNOW YOUR WATER

With much of the state currently facing drought conditions along with increasing concerns over water quality, it is essential for citizens to KNOW YOUR WATER. There are approximately 72,000 domestic private wells registered in the state of Kansas according to the Kansas Geological Survey (2020), but the water quality from these wells isn't guaranteed and could be contaminated. Often, private well users don't know that the water they're using could potentially be unsafe.

Private wells can be used for domestic human use, livestock use, lawn, and landscape irrigation, and more. Stacie Minson, K-State Watershed Specialist, shared "It's important to keep in mind you need to KNOW YOUR WATER to PROTECT YOUR WATER." Whether for human consumption or livestock consumption, good quality water is important, and testing must be done by the well owners as these wells are not regulated by the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act.

According to United States Geological Survey, approximately 151,000 people in Kansas receive their drinking water from private wells. Private well contamination can be caused by improperly disposed chemicals, animal wastes, pesticides, wastes injected underground, and naturally occurring substances. In addition, poor well location, inadequate well construction, and delayed or lack of well maintenance could contribute to contamination as well. Public water systems use water treatment and monitoring to protect consumers from such contaminants. Unlike public water users, private well owners are responsible for all quality and safety aspects of their water.

The most common health concern contaminants are coliform bacteria, especially E.coli or fecal coliform and nitrates. The National Ground Water Association and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment recommend annual private well testing for bacteria, nitrates and any contaminant of local concern. Other tests that might be of interest include: pH, hardness, iron, lead, copper, manganese, sodium chloride, petrochemical, and/or pesticides.

Minson encourages citizens to "set a reminder on your phone so life doesn't get busy, and you forget to collect a water sample. Setting that reminder makes it easy to UNDERSTAND YOUR WATER." Minson also suggests if you have any questions on private well testing, contact your local K-State Research and

Extension Office, Health Department or Environmental Office. These agencies may have water test kits available and could even assist you in sending samples off to a private lab.

In addition, you can find additional information by visiting <https://www.epa.gov/privatewells> or from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment – Recommended Water Tests for Private Wells Technical Guidance Document.