Alberta Health Services

Environmental Public Health

Interpretation of Bacteriological Results

The Provincial Laboratory of Public Health performs laboratory tests on well water samples. Initially the laboratory looks for whether bacteria are present or absent in a sample. The presence of certain types of bacteria such as *E-coli* or Total Coliforms indicates that your water may be unsafe to drink. Private laboratories often test for fecal coliforms instead of *E-coli*.

If your well water sample result shows the presence of *E-coli* or Total Coliforms, you will be contacted by a Health Inspector to discuss these results and what further actions should be taken.

The following definitions will help you interpret your report:

DEFINITIONS

Absent: Indicates bacteria were **not** identified in the well water sample tested.

Present: Indicates bacteria **were** identified in the well water sample tested.

E-coli:

The presence of *E-coli* in a private water supply indicates that the water supply has recently been impacted by fecal contamination and **should not be considered safe to drink**. This situation should be discussed with the Health Inspector who can make recommendations about boiling your water or other treatment methods.

Total Coliforms:

The presence of Total Coliforms in a private water supply indicates the possible surface contamination of the water supply. Total Coliforms may also indicate inadequate water treatment (if treatment used). This situation should be discussed with the Health Inspector who can make recommendations on what further action you should take.

For more information contact:

- www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/envhealth
- Calgary Health Link at 403-943-LINK or 1-866-408-LINK
- or your local health centre