

Do's and Don'ts for private well owners

Homeowners sometimes conduct activities around their well or make modifications to the well after it is constructed without being aware that these activities are illegal or that they pose a risk to their drinking water supply. Here are some common mistakes made by private well owners:

Don'ts:

- 1- **Some people see a well head as an eye sore and decide to cut back the casing and bury it during landscaping.**

When a well head is buried under ground, it is at greater risk of surface water infiltration and therefore of being exposed to potential nearby sources of contamination like road salt, pesticides, fertilizers, oil and gasoline etc.



2- Some people plant flowers or shrubs around their well in an attempt to conceal it as much as possible.

This may not be as risky as burying the well head however, it is not a good idea to add plant fertilizers or pesticides to the soil around your well and the ground around the well should slope away from it. In the case of shrubs, the root mass could interfere with the wiring extending out from the ground and cause problems with well function.

3- Some people remove their well cap or in the case of older wells the cap may become damaged or simply outdated (i.e. not watertight or vermin proof).

If you remove your well cap or if it is damaged or outdated, your well could become exposed to bacteria, insects and vermin such as rodents and if the cap is removed all together, it poses a safety risk to children and small animals.

4- Some people may decide to house a pet near their well head or even tie their pet directly to it.

If waste produced by a pet is allowed to accumulate around a well head, it becomes a potential source of contamination.

5- Some people decide to make alterations to their well for instance: removing the metal ID tag or in the case of a flowing well, drilling holes in the casing to allow excess water to escape.

Well drillers are required by law to permanently affix a metal ID tag to your well and it should never be removed. There are approved methods for controlling the flow in the case of flowing artesian wells. Drillers usually deal with this when a well is being drilled but if your well only begins to flow freely sometime after the well was drilled, you must hire a driller to come back and correct the problem. Removing the cap or drilling holes in the casing to allow excess water to escape is not an approved method.



Diagram: Example of a NB Well ID tag

6- Storing petroleum products or other chemicals near your well.

Anytime you house a potential source of contamination near your well, you risk contaminating the groundwater aquifer in the event of a leak or spill. Once the groundwater aquifer becomes contaminated, your well and potentially neighboring wells may have to be permanently decommissioned.

Do's:

Private well owners should...

- 1- As per Department of Health recommendations (see link), have their water tested at least twice per year for Total Coliforms and E. Coli preferably during the Spring thaw and Fall rainy seasons. Your water should also be tested whenever there is a change in appearance, taste, smell or color. If the chemical content of your water is unknown, it should be tested for inorganic parameters such as arsenic, lead, uranium and fluoride. These tests should be done regardless of any treatment devices you may have.
- 2- Regularly inspect their well head for damaged casing, well cap and for the presence of potential sources of contamination near the well.
- 3- Hire a licensed well driller when they need to have work done on their well.
- 4- Ensure the ground slopes away from the well head once well it is completed.



5- Ensure their well is fitted with a watertight, vermin proof well cap.



6- Decommission any abandoned wells on your property.