

ASSESSING THE SAFETY OF PRIVATE WATER SUPPLIES

(This appendix applies to water that comes into contact with teats, udders and milk (via internal equipment surfaces), and is not applicable to water that is used as livestock drinking water, or water used to wash down parlour stalls, walls and floors)

Regulation (EC) No 853/2004, Annex I, Part II (4)(d) requires the use of potable or clean water whenever necessary to prevent contamination during primary production. Current interpretation of this is that clean water can be used during certain primary production activities as long as the water meets the definition of clean contained in the regulations. That means that it does not contain micro-organisms, harmful substances or toxic marine plankton capable of directly or indirectly affecting the health quality of food. It also means that the clean water is not used as an ingredient and/ or is not intentionally added to the food.

A Private Water Supply (PWS) includes boreholes, springs and wells.

Ensuring the safety of water

PWS users must:

1. Complete a Risk Assessment on the PWS system from source to tap, including a dated signature at least on an annual basis but consideration should be given to completing further assessments following exceptional circumstances (i.e. heavy rain fall, reported contamination to the source etc.)
2. Test PWS water for hazards (microbiological and chemical) before use
3. Use both test results and the risk assessment to confirm water safety
4. Regularly maintain the equipment as per manufacturers' instructions
5. Where the Risk Assessment or Water Testing identifies a potential risk, details of investigations into the cause(s) of the problem and remedial actions taken must be recorded.

Risk assessment

PWSs are at risk of contamination from a range of sources, from surface water and livestock to humans and vermin and a range of contaminants – including pathogenic micro-organisms associated with faecal matter and chemicals. You must carry out regular checks on your PWS at least annually. This will include a Risk Assessment (see www.redtractorassurance.org.uk for a template) to identify if there have been any changes that may affect the safety of the water.

WATER TESTING – Verifying if water is safe through testing

Testing water for microbiological and chemical content is a means of verifying its safety. The presence of E.coli (or faecal coliforms) in excess of 10 CFU/100 ml is an indication that faecal contamination of the water source has occurred and that there may be a microbial safety risk associated with the water. This is the primary concern to the water supply (note there are a range of other contaminants that can be tested for and are useful information).

Use the flow diagram over the page to determine the water testing frequency and other action that should be taken.

When taking a water sample, ensure a fresh sample is taken (run the tap first), use a clean container and do not contaminate the sample once taken (e.g. from the tap as the sample is being taken).

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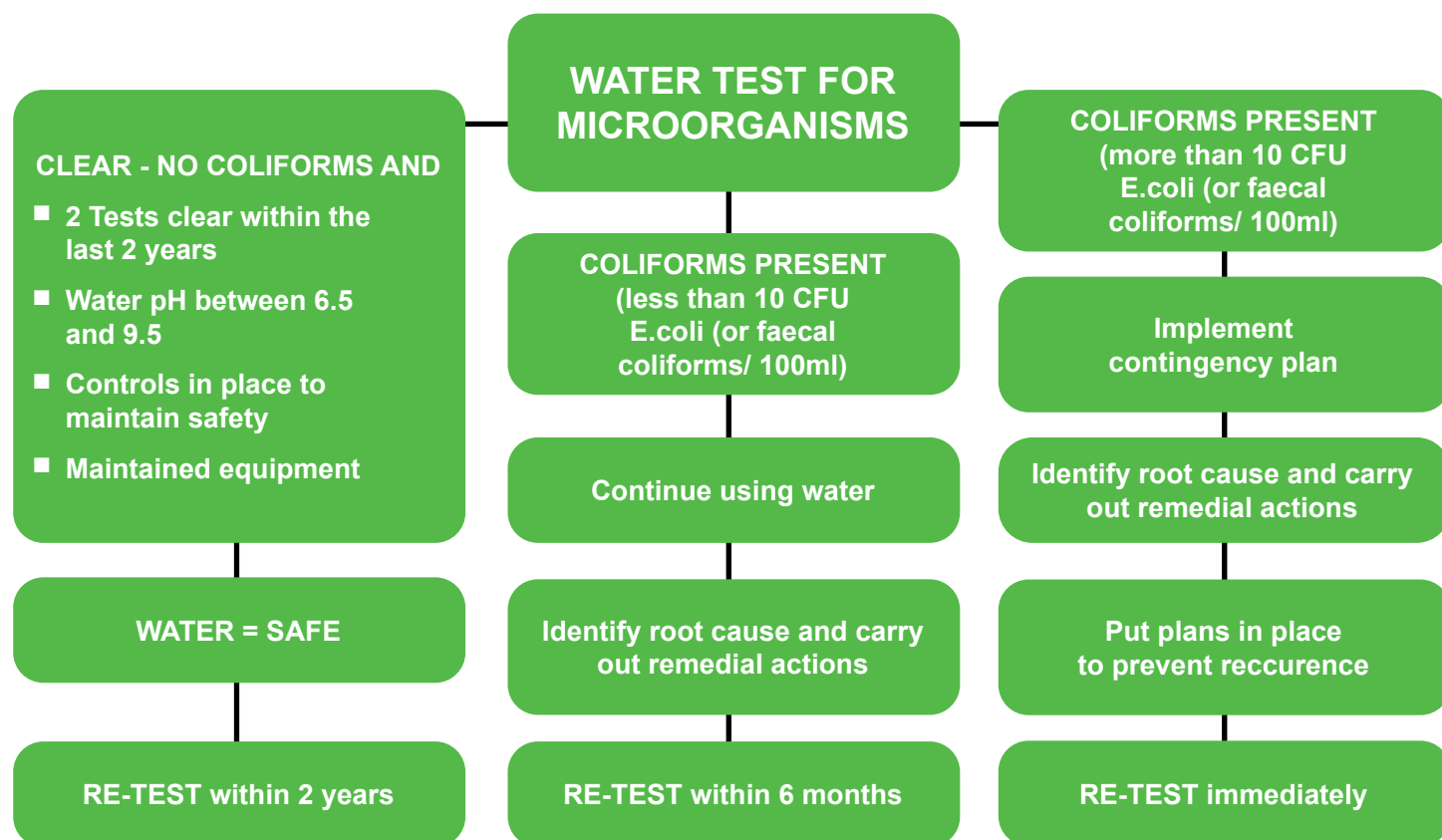
WATER TEST RESULTS – Remedial action

- Where less than 10 CFU E.coli (or faecal coliforms)/100 ml is found to be present following a water test, the water may be used.
- Where more than 10 CFU E.coli (or faecal coliforms)/100 ml are found to be present following a water test, the source of the problem should be investigated and the contingency plan implemented such that the water should either not be used or alternative steps should be taken to restrict use of the water until investigations have been carried out and remedial action has been taken. Such action may be to switch to another water source (e.g. mains water supply) or if this is not possible, the water should be treated to reduce the risk of microbial contamination before use and retested.
- Where water testing repeatedly fails on E.coli (or faecal coliforms), despite remedial action, the contingency plan must remain in place until written clearance from the Environmental Health Office or Local Authority to continue using the water for milk production is obtained. The EHO/ LA may require additional criteria before use.

Possible remedial actions must be appropriate to rectify the problem. Depending on why the source failed, they may include:

- Installation or replacement of UV filters
- Addition of dilute hypochlorite solution to the header tank (not suitable for header tanks used to supply livestock drinking water)
- Repair of the PWS chamber or replacement of any caps and seals
- Guidance from the equipment manufacturer

PWS - WATER TESTING FREQUENCY



Note: Some water test reports may report coliform presence as MPN/ 100ml instead of CFU/ 100ml - the critical limit for MPN is as stated for CFU.