

WATER FEATURE

not to be wasted



# Water system maintenance a must Protecting the source

**Adequate water supply is vital to stock health and productivity, and continual maintenance checks should cover the whole water system, from source to troughs.**

DairyNZ consulting officer Wayne Berry says the process should be tailored to the peculiarities of each farm. For example, piston pumps require a check of the leather washers and gland packing, while centrifugal pump checks should include actual flow rate (compared to specified rate), noisy bearings, and any water leaks from or around the pump.

A bladder pressure check is generally adequate for modern pressure tanks, while steel tanks need to be bled of excess water annually or as required, since water-logged pumps turn off and on continually.

Non-return valves and screens at the bottom of bores and wells should be inspected and pressure gauges checked for accuracy. Clean or unblock the hole in the stem if necessary.

Delivery lines, including taps, joints and pipes, can be checked visually and flow rates assessed at key points. Poor water quality can block lines over time and these can be manually cleared with an air compressor or simply putting a barley sugar into the pipeline. Replace lines and joints as needed, ideally burying new lines 600 mm below the surface to protect them from damage.

Empty and scrub inside surfaces of troughs and check valves and floats for damage or excessive wear and tear. Cracks in the trough walls can waste water and cause a bog around the trough, so either plaster with cement or replace the trough. Protect entry



A well-maintained farm water system will help to deliver healthy and happy stock.  
Photo: Nicola Topping / Real Image.

fittings (or goose-necks) from damage and ensure that the ground level around troughs is adequate to help protect equipment and improve stock access. Removing any thorny hedging and shorting fences from troughs will also keep stock happy.

Chemical contamination of water supplies is always a risk, but usually it is a very small one.

Most chemicals mentioned in the Drinking-Water Standards for New Zealand 2000 specify levels likely to cause adverse effects only after prolonged periods of exposure so, with some exceptions, chemicals are not the main area of concern unless there is a major chemical spillage.

By far the most common problems arise from microbiological contamination of the source waters. Animal, bird and even human effluent, introduced in one way or another upstream from a water supply, can make that water unfit for consumption.

Bacteria have always been of major concern, while protozoa such as Giardia and Cryptosporidium are increasingly being highlighted as causing ill health through drinking-water.

There are two ways of minimising the risk from these microbiological contaminants:

- Keep the source as clean as possible, by protecting the catchment and minimising the possibility of contamination.
- Treat the water to destroy any contaminants introduced.

The most successful approach is to use both these methods and to regularly monitor the water quality to demonstrate that any risks are being controlled.

Good systematic and ongoing risk management is important.

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Water quality and sedimentation are two major issues facing catchment planners in the Kaipara.

## Workshop series addresses Kaipara catchment planning

A series of farm planning workshops will be held in the first half of this year to raise awareness of catchment management issues around the Kaipara Harbour.

The day-long events are being organised by the Integrated Kaipara Harbour Management Group.

Project coordinator Leane Makey says the workshops are open to anyone interested in catchment management, but are pitched specifically at landowners.

A farm planning workshop at Otamatea Marae and Hanerau Farm, near Maungaturoto, in November looked at farm planning and how it fits with restoring the health of the harbour.

After a hearty lunch at the marae the participants headed out into the paddocks where Hanerau Farm manager Roger Taylor translated the theory into practice.

Participants were shown the farm's

foreshore fencing which prevented stock from accessing coastal waters and the tree planting programme to control stream bank erosion.

There was discussion on pasture management to limit soil erosion and the opportunities for managing the steeper hillsides and gullies to limit sediment and faecal run-off to the harbour.

The project has received government funding of \$30,000 for the next three years and is also supported by participating government and community agencies and hapu.

Five flagship demonstration sites have been set-up – on a dairy farm at Dargaville, a beef farm on the Otamatea River, two on the Araparera River and one near Parakai, South Head.

Workshop dates and venues are expected to be confirmed early next month. For further information about the project, contact Leane Makey on 021 818 102.

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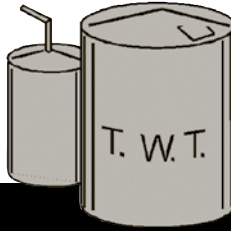
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Omaha Beach was one of the beaches tested for water quality.

## Water quality monitored at beaches during summer

Over summer, Auckland Council's Safeswim monitoring programme is providing regular assessments of water quality at beaches such as Omaha.

Water samples are collected from selected locations and then tested for bacteria to identify any potential public health risk.

All 180-plus beaches in the region were assessed on their level of use, contamination risk and special significance.

From this assessment 64 beaches were selected for weekly monitoring at the start of the 2011/12 season, including Omaha and Hatfields Beach. The water is tested for levels of bacteria called enterococci in marine water and

E. coli in freshwater.

Some beaches have a history of excellent water quality and present a low risk to public health and do not require monitoring. In the Mahurangi area, these beaches include Goat Island Marine Reserve and Anchor Bay at Tawharanui.

Some Rodney lakes are also tested for toxic algae where a potential problem exists.

All levels at Omaha were deemed safe in the January 10 sampling.

The Safeswim programme does not undertake to determine if beaches are physically safe for swimming or other recreational use.

Test results are available on the Council website or via 0800 723 379.

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# Clean drinking water plays major role in good health

Water used for drinking, teeth cleaning, hand washing, bathing, showering, food preparation and cooking needs to be free from harmful germs and chemicals. So does drinking water for stock and pets.

If your water comes from a mains supply, your water safety is monitored by Watercare. If your water comes from a water collection tank, it is up to you to keep your water safe. Tank water can come from various sources including rain off the roof, natural water from streams or lakes, a bore or a spring.

Water supplies from all these sources can easily become unsafe. For example, roof water may be corrosive or may become contaminated from dust, agricultural spraying or bird or possum droppings. River or stream water and shallow bore water and springs may contain harmful germs or chemicals or be discoloured and unpleasant to taste, and bore water can be hard and corrosive.

If you are unsure about the quality of your water, have it tested in a recognised laboratory.

Water contamination can cause illness such as diarrhoea and vomiting, which can be particularly dangerous for infants, old people or people with damaged immune systems.

To keep the rainwater roof collection system safe:

- Make sure the entire system is installed correctly
- Cover the tank to prevent animals, birds and other matter from entering.
- Roof areas should be kept clear of overhanging vegetation to prevent leaves and debris falling on to the catchment. Overhanging branches also give rodents, cats and possums access to the roof and allow birds to roost above it.
- Keep gutters clean

- Tanks should be inspected every one to two years and cleaned if necessary, but tank cleaning should ideally be carried out by tank-cleaning contractors.

Other ways to keep household water safe:

- Install a water filter or point-of-use device
- Disinfect unsafe water
- Water that is untreated or from mixed sources is often corrosive, so plastic pipes should be used to carry cold water.
- A backflow prevention device stops contaminated water from flowing back into the home supply.

For a pdf copy of the publication Water Tanks and Safe Household Water, go to [www.healthed.govt.nz/resource/water-collection-tanks-and-safe-household-water](http://www.healthed.govt.nz/resource/water-collection-tanks-and-safe-household-water)

### Where the water goes

It is estimated that a person only needs about five litres of drinking-quality water a day, for cooking, drinking and food preparation. The rest – about 150 litres on average per person per day – is used for toilets, showering, washing, the garden and other uses.

Save your water during Summer .....

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