Private water well screenings set for April 18 in Cameron, Hidalgo and Willacy counties

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EDINBURG, RAYMONDVILLE and SAN BENITO — The Texas Well Owner Network is hosting a water well screening from 8:30–9:30 a.m. April 18 at the AgriLife Extension office for Cameron County, 1390 W Expressway 83 San Benito, at the AgriLife Extension office in Hidalgo County, 410 N. 13th Ave in Edinburg, and at the AgriLife Extension office in Willacy County, 170 N. 3rd Street in Raymondville, to give residents the opportunity to have their well water screened.

A meeting explaining screening results will be held at 6:30 p.m. April 19 at the Texas A&M Research and Extension Center in Weslaco, 2415 E. Hwy 83.

The screenings are presented by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service offices in these counties in partnership with the Texas Water Resources Institute.

“Private water wells should be tested annually,” said John W. Smith, AgriLife Extension program specialist. “It is very important that only sampling bags and bottles from the AgriLife Extension office in Cameron, Hidalgo and Willacy Counties be used and all instructions for proper sampling are followed to ensure accurate results.”

He said those submitting samples should use only sampling bags and bottles from their respective AgriLife Extension office followed instructions to ensure accurate results. A $10 per sample fee will be collected when bags and bottles are picked up by participants. Bottles and bags will be available at least a week before the turn-in dates.

The samples must be turned in by 9:30 a.m. on the day of the screening. Samples will be screened for common contaminants, including total coliform bacteria, E. coli, nitrate-nitrogen and salinity.

Research shows the presence of E. coli bacteria in water indicates that waste from humans or warm-blooded animals may have contaminated the water. Water contaminated with E. coli is more likely to also have pathogens present that can cause diarrhea, cramps, nausea or other symptoms.

“Water with nitrate-nitrogen at levels of 10 parts per million is considered unsafe for human consumption,” Smith said. “These nitrate levels above 10 parts per million can disrupt the ability of blood to carry oxygen throughout the body, resulting in a condition called methemoglobinemia. Infants less than 6 months of age and young livestock are most susceptible.”
Salinity as measured by total dissolved solids will also be determined for each sample. Water with high levels may leave deposits and have a salty taste, and using water with high levels for irrigation may damage soil or plants.

Smith said it is extremely important for those submitting samples to be at the meeting to receive results, learn corrective measures for identified problems and to improve understanding of private well management.

For more information for the Cameron County screening, call 956-361-8236, for the Hidalgo County screening, call 956-383-1026 and for the Willacy County screening, call 956-689-2412.

To learn more about programs offered through the Texas Well Owner Network or to find additional publications and resources, go to http://twon.tamu.edu.

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