

As the flood waters recede and we are able to get back in to our farms and ranchers it is important to think about drinking water safety. It is common for private wells to be immersed with the flood waters. The flood waters commonly contain high levels of bacteria such as fecal coliforms and *E. coli*. These microbes can cause short-term health effects such as diarrhea, cramps, nausea, headaches or other symptoms. For infants and young children, some of the elderly and people with severely compromised immune systems may be more susceptible.

Until your well water has tested negative for bacteria, it is recommend to boil your water at a vigorous boil for 1 minute prior to use. For more information on boiling water and/or chlorinating personal water please refer to https://go.unl.edu/drinking_water_flood.

How to test for bacteria contamination

- A sterile bottle must be used to place the water sample in to assure an accurate report.
 - Middle Niobrara NRD – Valentine has bottles for pick up.
- The bottle may contain a small white pill or powder. If it does, leave the pill or powder in the bottle.
- Choose an inside faucet to collect the water sample and remove the aerator if one is present. Turn the water on cold water and allow it to run for about 5 minutes. This assures that fresh clean water from the well is being collected.
- Avoid touching or contaminating the inside of the bottle or cap. Carefully remove the lid from the sample containers and hold the cap by the outside of the cap. (If you touch the inside of the cap or bottle, you could contaminate the sample with bacteria)
- Fill the container with water to the marked line if a line is present. If no line is present fill the bottle $\frac{3}{4}$'s full.
- Bring your samples to the Middle Niobrara NRD for testing. Samples need to be delivered within 2-4 hours following the collection. The MNNRD will be receiving samples from Cherry County at their office on April 10th from 1-5 PM.

Testing facilities

The Middle Niobrara NRD in Valentine can test for both nitrates and coliform bacteria. If you have questions or need for information, contact the Middle Niobrara NRD at 402-376-3241.