

Extension offers home well testing workshops

By Bonnie Coblentz
MSU Extension Service

STARKVILLE, Miss. -- Thirty-five percent of Mississippi's private drinking wells test positive for bacteria, which makes testing and remediation key health issues for the state.

The Mississippi State University Extension Service is systematically offering this testing, along with education on remediation if needed, at locations across the state. Upcoming free workshops are Nov. 21 at the MSU Extension office in Tate County and Dec. 5 at the MSU Extension office in Pearl River County.

Jason Barrett, an assistant Extension professor in the Mississippi State University Extension Center for Government and Community Development, coordinates and delivers these workshops. An EPA grant makes it possible to offer the testing and training at no cost.

"Based on the most recent data available, 35% of home wells that we've tested have total coliform bacteria present, and this includes 3% that have E. coli," Barrett said. "Although 65% of home wells we test come back clean and clear, it's the others that are not that we're concerned about."

The vast majority of Mississippi private wells that supply drinking water to homes have no treatment device at all. A small percentage of homes have sediment filters, but just 1% have disinfection systems.

"About 90% of the nation is drinking from community water systems that have monthly testing and disinfection," Barrett said. "But the majority of people using home wells have no disinfection."

Those who want to have their water tested and participate in the workshop should come by their county Extension office one week before the event to pick up a sample bottle and instructions. Samples must be dropped off at the same Extension office the day before the workshop.

"At 6 p.m. on the day of the workshop, we will distribute sample testing results and walk them through what they mean and what next steps they should take if remediation is required," Barrett said.

MSU is an equal opportunity institution. For disability accommodation or other information, please contact Barrett at 662-325-1788 or @msstate.edu.

Specific locations and details:

Tate County, Nov. 21 workshop, 6 p.m.

#1 French's Alley, Senatobia, MS 38668

Pick up sample bottles at Tate County office Nov. 11-19

Drop off samples at Tate County office Nov. 20

Pearl River County, Dec. 5 workshop, 6 p.m.

417 Hwy. 11 North, Poplarville, MS 39470

Pick up sample bottles at Pearl River County office Nov. 25 to Dec. 4

Drop off samples at Pearl River County office Dec. 4