



# News Release

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## **DEQ and ODAFF Release Findings from Locust Grove Sampling**

The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture Food, and Forestry (ODAFF) have released their findings of a survey conducted on private water wells in the Locust Grove area. The purpose of this survey was to look at wells within a five-mile radius of Locust Grove to determine if the wells were contaminated with harmful bacteria. Samples were collected and analyzed for total coliform and *E. coli* bacteria. Total coliform are a group of bacteria that are indicators of environmental pollution. In that group are *E. coli*. Drinking water for public water supplies is routinely evaluated using these two tests.

Of the 113 wells tested, 76-percent initially showed bacteriological contamination. This is substantially higher than the rate that would be expected for sampling in rural areas. Of the 27 wells that were disinfected by the well owners, 81-percent still tested positive after disinfection.

At the request of the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH), private water well samples taken from the Locust Grove area were sent to the Public Health Laboratory for further analysis. Disease causing *E. coli* was found in some samples. However *E. coli* O111, the bacteria identified as the cause of an outbreak of illness associated with The Country Cottage restaurant last year, was not found.

In addition to well sampling and analysis, DEQ and ODAFF investigated potential sources of harmful bacteria near contaminated wells. While the investigation found no definite source of contamination, potential causes for well contamination included poorly constructed or maintained wells, leaking septic systems, and domestic and farm animals in close proximity to wells.

Based on results of this survey, DEQ recommends one of the following methods to assure a safe drinking water supply for Locust Grove residents who are on private water wells:

- Use of bottled water for drinking, cooking and brushing teeth, or boiling the water for drinking and other activities that involve intentional or accidental ingestion
- Connection to an available municipal or rural water supply
- Equipping the well system with full-time filtration and chlorination, which requires regular maintenance and monitoring by the well owner

Additionally, DEQ and ODAFF recommend that the state pursue funding for an in-depth study of the aquifer, designed to enable the state to make informed decisions regarding aquifer management and the need for various state agencies to adopt regulations related to use and protection of vulnerable aquifers.

To view the complete findings of this survey, visit [www.deq.state.ok.us](http://www.deq.state.ok.us).

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