



INTERPRETATION OF WATER ANALYSIS REPORT

Bacteriological quality of drinking water is determined by testing for coliform bacteria. These bacteria are ubiquitous and occur naturally in the intestinal tracts of humans/animals, and are also present in plants, soil, air and water. Although coliform bacteria normally do not cause illness, they should **not** be present in drinking water. Their presence suggests an unknown level of contamination.

Escherichia coli (E. coli), unlike its more virulent strain E. coli 0157:H, is a harmless bacterium found in the intestinal tracts of humans/animal. This bacteria serves as an indicator for detecting fecal contamination in the water. Thus, the presence of E. coli in the water sample indicates a high probability that sewage is the primary pollutant. Sewage contamination increases the likelihood of the presence of potential disease causing organisms in the drinking water.

Laboratory results are typically reported as **PRESENT** or **ABSENT** for total coliform and E. coli organisms. The laboratory reports may be interpreted as follows:

TEST RESULTS		
Total Coliform	Escherichia coli or E. coli	Water Quality
Absent	Absent	<i>Safe</i>
Present	Absent	<i>Questionable</i>
Present	Present	<i>Unsafe</i>

If your water results come back with E. coli present the recommendation is to immediately switch to bottled water, for drinking/cooking purposes. For proper disinfection procedures and maintenance see our handouts on *Troubleshooting a Contaminated Water System* and *Disinfection of a Contaminated Drinking Water System*.