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MARYLAND COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
COLLEGE PARK • EASTERN SHORE

SEPTEMBER EXTENSION HAPPENINGS CALL THE EXTENSION OFFICE TO REGISTER

- **SAVE THE DATE! Nov. 18 – Second Annual University of Maryland Horse Conference.** Topics include farm and business management, pasture management, health and nutrition. To be held at the Anne Arundel Community College, Arnold Campus. Booth space and sponsorship opportunities are available; call 301-405-1392 for more information.
- **Sept. 9 – Open House at the Western Maryland Research and Education Center** at Keedysville. Hay rides, fun for the kids – bring the whole family! Visit www.agnropenhouses.umd.edu for more information.
- **Sept. 16 – Pasture Walk** at the Central Maryland Research and Education Center in Ellicott City. Learn how to identify plants in your pasture, manage your fields for optimum growth and design a rotational grazing plan for small acreages. **Pre-registration is required;** \$10 per person (registration is limited to the first 40 people, so sign up early). Contact the Howard County Extension Office (410-313-2707) to register. Sponsored by MidAtlantic Farm Credit.
- **Sept. 30 – Open House at the Central Maryland Research and Education Center** at Ellicott City. Find out what equine research at the University of Maryland is all about. The farm is located on the corner of Folly Quarter and Homewood Roads. Visit www.agnropenhouses.umd.edu for more information.

However, offering horses water from wells or natural sources is more likely to introduce contaminants – and it's those water sources that are more likely to need testing. Water from wells and natural sources might only need to be tested on an annual basis, but some owners test once during each of the four seasons, while still others have never had their water quality tested.

Water quality can be monitored by the horse owner using a certified water testing laboratory or commercially available kits.

A list of certified water quality testing laboratories can be obtained from the Maryland Department of the Environment (<http://www.mde.state.md.us/>). Water quality tests may cost between \$10-\$50 for each sample submitted, and that cost will increase with any special analyses that are added. Using kits is less complex and inexpensive; however, they don't insure quality control. Water quality tests may include analyses for nitrates, pH, total dissolved solids, minerals, pH, coliform bacteria, and chemical contaminants. Interpretation of the results and recommendations about what steps to take next, if any, should be done in consultation with a specialist.

Also, keep in mind that providing good clean quality water to your horses might not be sufficient. You need to monitor their daily intake to make sure that they are drinking enough water. The average horse will consume about 1% of its body weight in water each day, or about 12 gallons for the average 1200-pound horse. Water intake may be increased during hot and humid climates, when horses are exercised or fed high protein diets, or when a mare is in late gestation or lactating.

Contact your county MCE or Natural Resources Conservation Services office for further information and assistance regarding testing your farm's water sources.



Submitted by:
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Q How do I know whether the water I give my horses is safe for them to drink?

A The quality of our drinking water and that of our horses is a very important health issue. Water quality testing is usually initiated for several reasons, including owner interest, as part of a conservation plan, for regulatory purposes, when changes in the clarity, color, or smell occur, extreme weather conditions like floods, or decreased palatability.

If the water supply to your barn comes from public or municipal water systems, you are unlikely to have a problem with poor water quality unless there is contamination in your pipes. Also, you should be able to get a copy of the annual water quality report from that system.

This column is sponsored by the University of Maryland. The views expressed herein are those of the author and are not necessarily those of The Equiery's publisher or staff.