



Overall Farmstead Assessment

Now that you've finished the parts of the *Farm•A•Syst* assessment that fit your farming operation, you probably have a good idea of what water-quality risks exist around your farmstead. Use the chart on the next page to list the high-risk conditions and practices you identified while answering the questions in the other factsheets.

Next, fill in the "Response Options" and "Taking Action" sections in the chart. The information found in the factsheets includes actions for you to consider.

Response Options

Check either "Immediate Action Possible" or "Further Planning Required." This is a quick assessment of whether the change will require major effort or money, like building a containment structure under your fuel tanks, or whether it just requires a change in practice, like clearly labeling stored pesticides.

Taking Action

Decide now on a possible first step to address each concern and write it down. It may be removing pesticide containers from the wellhouse, or making a phone call to get information on composting poultry litter and carcasses.

The first step for a concern you identified as "Immediate Action Possible" should be easier than a first step for a major or costly project. In fact, further action may not be necessary if the first step eliminates the source of concern, like removing pesticides from the wellhouse. But no matter how simple or how complicated that initial step may be, taking action to address the high-risk concerns you have listed is extremely important.

Keep this chart handy. It provides important information for you to begin to protect your drinking water effectively. Refer to it often and seek assistance with measures you plan to take to preserve the quality of your water. The contacts and references in each factsheet can also be helpful as you put your plans into action.

A Few Final Words. . . .

After doing all you can to reduce the risk of groundwater contamination on your farmstead, you may still have test results that show a high level of one or more contaminants.

*One factor could be conditions and activities away from the core of the farmstead. For example, nitrate could be leaching from your cropland.

*Problems can originate in distant areas, too. Depending on local geology, activities miles away can result in groundwater contamination that moves slowly toward your property and your water supply. It may take years for a spill on someone else's land to show up in your well. Leaking petroleum tanks, farm dumps, and trash thrown into sinkholes far from your property can affect your drinking water—*just like conditions and activities at your farmstead have the potential to affect the drinking water of your neighbors.*

You may want to encourage your neighbors to use this farmstead assessment. You may also want to keep track of potential sources of contamination beyond your farmstead.

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Your *Farm•A•Syst* factsheet results may reveal a need for changes on your farmstead, even though your water-quality test results are quite good. Your well may be uphill from your farmstead so the water drawn from that area is not affected by your activities. That doesn't mean that contaminants are not entering the groundwater and affecting someone else's drinking water. Be as careful as possible about farmstead management, especially if your site assessment shows your farmstead is on land with a high risk of groundwater contamination.

For further information, consult the references listed in the worksheets.

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Billy G. Hicks, Dean