AG ENGINEERING EDGE
Answers to questions about structures, ventilation, soil, water, waste, energy, machinery and safety.

Resolve to protect your water

Heavy rainfall and flooding prompt lots of folks to call with "bad water" problems. Bacterial contamination is the most common, but tests show unusually high amounts of iron and changing pH in some samples as well. Someone asked if flooding along the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers could be responsible for water problems in the Ozarks. Good question, considering our local 1000-foot deep wells draw water from about the same elevation that those rivers run.

For the answer, I contacted the Missouri Department of Natural Resources' Water Resources Center at Rolla, Mo. They assured me that the river flooding would not influence Ozarks water quality because the river water won't "backfeed" into our water table. More likely, all the rain we had raised the local water tables and caused leaching of minerals from underground rock and rusted, steel well casings not normally in contact with water.

High iron levels or fluctuating pH levels don't create a health hazard, but bacterial contamination does. Several county health department sanitarians tell me it is harder now to get a "safe sample," even after repeated shock chlorination of the water well.

The Missouri Ozarks is one of the most geologically fragile areas of the country. Sinkholes behave like funnels, allowing surface water (and any pollutants it contains) to go directly to the groundwater. This recharge process, which may take months or years in other parts of the country, occurs within hours or days in the Ozarks.

Start the new year off right with a resolution to identify activities that create potential pollution problems around your farm or home.