

Keeping your raw water supply safe

Many Tasmanians draw their household water supply from rainwater tanks, nearby waterways, bores or dams.

These raw, untreated water sources have potential to carry harmful germs, chemicals or other contaminants that may make you sick. But there are steps you can take to help you and your family stay healthy.

PRECAUTIONS

If you rely on untreated water supplies for drinking:

- Make sure you regularly maintain the water catchment and storage systems.
- Water from rainwater tanks and bores should be boiled before it is used for drinking or cooking by very young children, the elderly or people with chronic disease.
- Water from rivers or dams should always be boiled before drinking or cooking.

RAINWATER TANKS

If you don't have mains water, collecting rainwater from your roof is a good alternative. However, you should make sure your tank is properly installed and maintained.

- **Make sure your first flush device works** as this will stop a lot of accumulated roof contaminants from going into your tank when it rains.
- **Gutters should be kept clear of soil and decaying vegetation** which can accumulate and lead to poor water odour and taste.
- **Cut back any overhanging branches** as this will minimise leaf litter and cut off one route for wildlife to get on to your roof.
- **The tank and tank roof** should not have any holes or gaps that can let animals or birds in.

TULARAEMIA IN TASMANIA

After being bitten by possums, two Tasmanians have been diagnosed with the rare disease Tularaemia. This particular form of Tularaemia was previously unknown in the southern hemisphere. A joint investigation has been launched by the Public and Environmental Health Service and the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment.

THE RISK OF TULARAEMIA IS LOW

Tularaemia is rarely passed on through untreated drinking water. Proper maintenance of your water system will further reduce this risk. Boiling water will eliminate any risk.

Reticulated (mains) water that is treated with chlorine is safe to drink.

Tularaemia does not pass from person to person.

We are in the early stages of understanding this rare disease. For the time being we must assume that various wild animals (and their ticks) may pose a risk of spreading Tularaemia in Tasmania. Ongoing research is expected to show the extent of the risk and the particular animals involved.

In general, it is not a good idea to handle wild animals as they can carry various germs that cause diseases in humans. If you are going to come into direct contact with wild animals, wear long sleeves and gloves, and wash your hands afterwards. Game meat should be cooked thoroughly before eating.

If you are going bushwalking or camping, wear insect repellent and long pants and sleeves. Remove any ticks promptly with fine-tipped tweezers.

To report a sick wild animal, call the Animal Diseases Emergency Hotline on 1800 675 888.

For more information and advice, call the Public Health Hotline on 1800 671 738 or go to www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/peh