

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT
BY DEPUTY J.H. YOUNG OF ST. BRELADE
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 1st APRIL 2014**

Question

Will the Minister inform the Assembly of the number of homes in the Island which are not served by mains water and rely on private boreholes, and the number which are either known to have suffered recent bacteriological contamination of drinking water or are sited in localities which are believed are prone to contamination at times of high water table, and what action his department is able to take to prevent such contamination and his policy intentions towards drinking water supplies for any affected properties?

Answer

The total number of households served by water supplies from private wells or boreholes that were either registered or licenced under the Water Resources (Jersey) Law 2007 was 3388 as at the end of 2013. The total number of people using these water supplies was about 9400 (approximately 10% of the Island's population).

Bacterial contamination of private water supplies can derive from a range of land use activities including private sewerage systems (septic tanks and soakaways), agriculture, areas used for dog walking and areas where flocks of ducks and geese congregate and road runoff. There is an inherent risk associated with using a shallow and unregulated water supply, particularly if the householder does not have any treatment installed or does not get the water tested regularly.

Environmental Protection officers from the Department of the Environment investigate all reported pollution incidents that affect private water supplies under the Water Pollution (Jersey) Law 2000. The major source of bacteriological contamination of private drinking water supplies is through the spreading of organic waste (slurry). Since 2009, officers have attended a total of five private water supplies that were contaminated by slurry.

The spreading of organic waste to land is a good way to re-use the nutrient in it, however, because of the Island's high population density and the large number of receptors such as private water supplies it has to be carried out with utmost and informed care.

The Department of the Environment uses a mixture of regulation, incentives and education in order to reduce the risks of water pollution occurring.

The Water Pollution (Jersey) Law 2000 allows for approved codes of practice to be approved by the Minister. The Code of Good Agricultural Practice for the Protection of Water is one such code "The Water Code (Jersey)". The Water Code sets out measures that farmers can take to prevent water pollution.

Another control that the Department has implemented as part of the Diffuse Pollution Project is to make the receipt of the Single Area Payment subsidy contingent on farmers meeting certain standards and levels of environmental performance (known as cross compliance). This includes compliance with this Water Code, along with other measures to limit or prevent pollution, such as the production of a farm manure and waste management plan, a pollution incident contingency plan, a pesticide recording system and a soil protection review.

There are many benefits of the registration and licensing of water sources, as required under the Water Resources (Jersey) Law 2007 Law. One such is the Farm Risk Map¹ which was developed by the Department and made available to farmers online. The map assists farmers to properly assess the risk of spreading agricultural slurry on specific fields. The map also highlights a 50 metre radius zone around each water source within which slurry should not be spread, and these are marked in red. A 'traffic light system' for individual fields is also incorporated to indicate the risk of pollution associated with spreading slurry. Certain fields close to water sources are marked orange to denote caution. Slurry application is permitted in such fields as long as it is not spread within 50m of a borehole or well, and other conditions (the type of crop cover, weather forecast etc.) suggest that the risk is likely to be low.

Prior to the implementation of the Water Resources Law the location of private water supplies was largely unknown. Thus the Law and the location map provides much better protection for owners and provides a useful tool for departmental officers when attending pollution incidents.

The Department has assisted farmers with the installation of slurry storage tanks on all Island dairy farms. The storage enables the farmer to better time and target the spreading of slurry. Slurry is currently stored over the winter period so that there is no need to spread it on fields in times of high winter rainfall/run-off and when the nutrients cannot be taken up by plant growth.

Notwithstanding, any reports of private water supply that are polluted received by officers (through the pollution hotline 24/7 number tel: 709535) will be fully investigated with enforcement action being taken according to the Water Pollution (Jersey) Law 2000 and Environmental Protection's Enforcement Policy as agreed with the Attorney General. In such instances, the Department will inform Health Protection who can advise householders of health aspects of contaminated drinking water. The re-installation of a clean water supply will normally be undertaken through the household's insurance and it is important that households with private water supplies check the provisions of their policy.

¹ The Farm Risk Map is available to the public as part of guidance on 'Preventing water pollution' on the States of Jersey website; (<http://www.gov.je/Industry/FarmingFishing/PlantsProduce/Pages/PreventWaterPollution.aspx>)