

# Looking Out For The Environment

## Keeping Your Well Water Safe

For rural Americans, wells are the most important source of water for their family, animals and crops. A turn of the tap brings water for drinking, cooking, livestock, crop irrigation and many other uses.

Because it's so valuable, it's critical that we all make every effort to keep our well water safe. To protect it from contamination, you need to know as much as you can about the chemicals you use and the land

you farm. Listed on the right are some factors that will determine just how careful you need to be.

Some combination of four major factors determine whether an ag chemical is likely to reach ground water: properties of the chemical, properties of the soil, conditions of the site, and chemical use management practices. Runoff into nearby surface water is also affected by these factors. For each site and combination of factors, the potential

for water contamination can vary greatly.

Ag chemical containers often list on their labels warnings about their potential to leach to ground water. If you can't find the information you need, your Cooperative

Extension Service, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, EPA or manufacturer's representatives can provide information on the leaching potential of different ag chemicals.

### Is Your Ground Water Vulnerable?

#### Chemicals on Hand:

If spilled on the soil, would your ag chemical products leach downward instead of binding to the soil?

If spilled, would your products break down slowly in the soil?

#### Site Characteristics:

Is the water table (ground water) near the surface of your farmland?

Are there sinkholes or unsafe wells on your property?

If spilled, would your products runoff toward wells or surface water supplies?

#### Soil Properties:

Is your soil porous, allowing large quantities of water to move through it rapidly?

Is soil organic matter insufficient to help bind spilled chemicals and slow their movement in the soil?

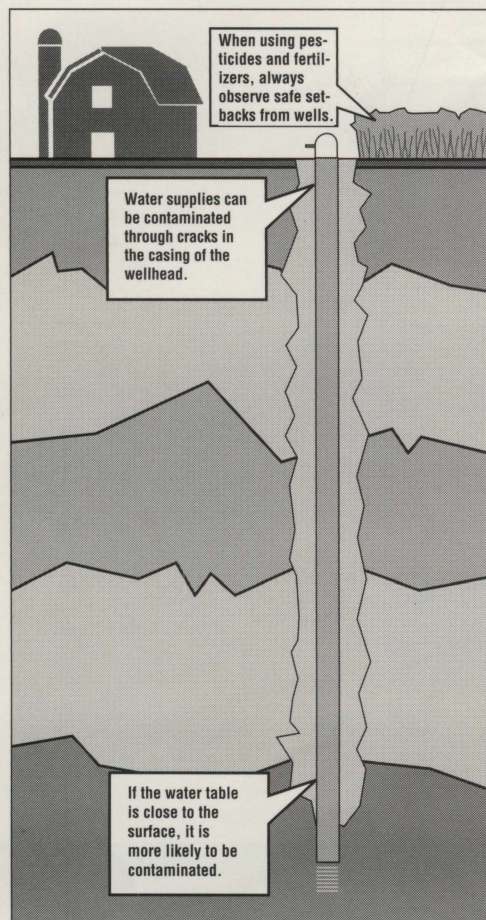
#### Management Factors:

Do you store, mix or load chemicals near your wells?

Do you fail to properly rinse ag chemical containers?

Is your chemigation or spraying equipment faulty or miscalibrated?

This information is provided by the Alliance for a Clean Rural Environment, a non-profit, non-political organization encouraging environmental stewardship and protection of water quality, supported by the makers of crop protection chemicals.



## Farming Smarter

To protect your well water, carefully consider your choice of chemicals, cultivation practices and other management decisions for your crop, soil type, land condition, weather patterns and farming situation. These decisions are especially important if you farm in an environmentally sensitive area - one with highly vulnerable water supplies, wildlife or water fowl.

Doing a better job of managing ag chemicals doesn't necessarily mean a greater burden for you. It just means everyone must keep farming smarter, to protect the very resources that make our countryside such a great place to live.

## Below the Surface

If you could look beneath the surface of your farm, you'd likely find a complex system of rock, sand and gravel "containers" (aquifers) that provide water for drinking, irrigation and other uses. Roughly 97 percent of rural Americans depend on this underground water supply for drinking. Pure water is impossible to find; nature and mankind have dissolved all kinds of things in our water. But, most people find it unacceptable to have even the tiniest traces of pesticides in their water, no matter how insignificant. Keep this in mind as you carry out your crop production activities.