



## Providing safe water for poultry

Clean, pathogen-free, high-quality drinking water is essential to maintain poultry health and minimise diseases.

Water sources vary in their risk of introducing diseases to your flock. If using high-risk sources for your poultry (e.g. surface water such as dams and rivers), water must be tested and sanitised to reduce the risk.

### Water source risk

Risk rating	Source	Recommendation
 Very low risk	<b>Mains water</b> (i.e. town water) is the most biosecure water source for poultry as it is treated and sanitised before distribution.	No testing or sanitisation needed
 Low risk	<b>Ground water</b> (e.g. bores, springs) often varies in salinity levels and mineral composition between locations but contamination is uncommon.	Test water for nutrient suitability and sanitise if needed
 High risk	<b>Surface water</b> (e.g. dams, rivers) poses the highest risk for introducing disease to your flock, due to increased exposure to wild birds. By drinking water contaminated by wild birds, your flock can become infected by bacterial (e.g. <i>E. coli</i> , <i>salmonella</i> ) and viral diseases (e.g. avian influenza, Newcastle disease).	It is essential to test surface water and sanitise

Untreated surface water can be contaminated by bird and animal faeces, and could cause disease in your flock (e.g. avian influenza)



## Testing

- Test surface water for disease pathogens (bacteria, viruses), turbidity, organic material, salinity, pH, electrolytes and heavy metals.
- If test results show bacteria and viruses are present, sanitise the water.
- The remaining results will determine if the water source needs to be pre-treated, and which sanitisation methods are most suitable.

## Sanitisation

- If using surface water for poultry, consider fencing or covering to minimise direct access and contamination by wild birds or other animals.
- Water with high levels of organic material may require pre-treatment with flocculants and mechanical filters to help remove solids.
- Both mechanical (e.g. UV light) or chemical (e.g. oxidisers, organic acids) sanitisers can be used to eliminate disease pathogens.
- Chlorine sanitisers are the most effective chemicals to inactivate disease pathogens.
- Choose the sanitiser based on the type of pathogen(s) found at testing. Follow the manufacturer's instructions to ensure the sanitiser is safe and effective.
- Test the water after sanitising to check sanitiser and pathogen levels.

## Management

- Place drinking containers under cover where wild birds cannot access them.
- Use containers with minimal exposed water surface area and place them where they cannot be perched on or tipped over easily.
- Check and clean water supply pipes and storage systems as needed to remove build-up of organic matter.
- Test water at source and point of consumption twice yearly or if the source changes.

## More information

- **Farm Biosecurity website:** National Water Biosecurity Manual for Poultry Production



### Important Disclaimer

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