



State Agency PFAS Update

January 14, 2022

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What is PFAS

- “PFAS” (per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances) are a large group of synthetic fluorinated chemicals.
- This family of chemicals take a long time to break down in the environment due to the extremely strong bond between fluorine and carbon.
- Called “forever chemicals” because of how they persist in the environment.
- Studies suggest that these chemicals may affect cholesterol levels, thyroid function, birth weight, liver function, infant development, the immune system, and may increase the risk of some cancers including prostate, kidney, and testicular cancers.

Why and Where are they in the environment?

- PFAS chemicals have been used widely in products across the country since the mid-20th century. Resist water, stains, heat, and grease.
- Found in clothing/textiles, furniture fabric, food packaging, carpets, cookware, electronics, makeup, fire fighting foam, etc.
- Used so widely that they are present in our wastewater in septic tanks and in treatment plants.
- Found in groundwater and soils where materials containing PFAS were utilized or disposed.

Why are we finding PFAS in Maine?

- Land spreading of treated municipal wastewater residuals and industrial residuals. Permitted program to amend fields with nutrients.
- PFAS has also been found at former military sites and closed unlined landfills.
- Dairy farm in Arundel with history of residual spreading tested in 2016-2017.
- Milk exceeded State's current Action Level for PFOS at 210 parts per trillion (ppt).

Response to PFAS Contamination

- Governor's PFAS Task Force in March 2019. Recommendations regarding safe drinking water and food and identifying and investigating PFAS in the environment.
- Since 2019: development of PFAS screening levels for drinking water, soil beneficial use, milk, beef, and crop-specific soil (soil-hay-milk; soil-corn silage-milk).
- Retail milk testing led to identification of additional dairy farm with PFOS above state's milk Action Level; DEP water testing led to a third.

Response to PFAS Contamination, cont'd.

- By 2025, Maine Department of Environmental Protection must test groundwater and soil at all locations (700+) with known sludge or septage application.
- DACF actively coordinating with DEP and CDC where agricultural locations involved.
- DACF identifying and prioritizing potential research projects with academic partners.

DACF's Farm-Specific Response

Our goal: identify, then **limit or eliminate the PFAS in impacted products.**

- DACF conducts testing of milk, feed, soil, meat, livestock (post-mortem). Work with producers to interpret and make management recommendations. Progress in dropping PFAS levels in milk.
- Budgetary funding available to help farms with confirmed contamination: testing, water filter, and indemnification*
- No *federal* standards for most foods; Maine has had to devise state testing and action levels.
- Lab testing is expensive and takes time.
- No live animal tests available – yet.
- Major challenge – emerging science, lots of unknowns


Producers can reach out with questions:

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Thank You.

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