

August 2015 – Article 4 of 5 in a series of interesting and informative articles introducing you to the people working to provide private well owners with the knowledge and tools they need to care for their water wells.

## **The People Behind the Program – Agriculture Water Engineers**

*The provincial Working Well program provides information, resources and hands-on workshops to Alberta's private well owners. Meet the real people who are helping to deliver it.*

When members of Alberta's agriculture industry dial 310-FARM and ask to be connected with a well water specialist, they may end up speaking to Brandon Leask, an Agriculture Water Engineer with the Farm Water Supply Branch of Alberta Agriculture and Forestry. Leask lives in the City of Red Deer with his wife and one-year old daughter and he is the shock chlorination content specialist in his department. If someone has technical questions about shock chlorination, they will probably end up talking to him.

Leask has been with Alberta Agriculture and Forestry for seven years and even though he enjoys helping people resolve their well water problems, his job can be challenging. "People tend not to think about water until it's a problem," he says. "There are all sorts of things that can contaminate water supplies and it's hard when I have to tell someone to stop drinking their water."

One of the best resources to assist private well owners is the Working Well program, a program designed to provide private well owners with the information and tools they need to properly care for their wells. Leask and other water engineers and water specialists from Alberta Agriculture and Forestry work as presenters at free community workshops offered through the program. "You need to have so many skills to live in the country and have your own private water system," says Leask. "The Working Well program brings experts together in one place, so well owners can learn what they need to know to maintain and protect their water supply."

Workshop presentations cover a wide variety of information about how water wells work, water well construction, common well problems, shock chlorination, threats to a ground water supply and water sampling and testing. Workshop experts are also available as technical experts to answer specific well water questions. "Urban municipalities have water operators that work to ensure the municipal water supply is safe," explains Leask. "Rural water users can access that same kind of expertise through the Working Well program or through the Ag-Info Centre hotline. We're all here to help private well owners and to protect Alberta's ground water supply."

Over the years, Leask has fielded many calls from well owners who are having problems with their water supply. He's seen almost everything from rodent infestations in well systems to chemical or bacterial contamination that seeps into a ground water supply through an old abandoned well that has not been properly decommissioned. Sometimes the problems are easily remedied and other times there is no easy solution. Experience has taught him that when it comes to water wells, "An ounce of prevention really is worth a pound of cure." Those who want to learn how to easily prevent well water issues can do so by participating in the Working Well program.



### **Learn how to maintain and protect your water well**

Online resources and free community-based workshops offered by the Working Well program provide well owners with the information and tools they need to properly care for their wells. For more information, visit the Working Well website at:

[www.workingwell.alberta.ca](http://www.workingwell.alberta.ca)