

## **Common Questions**

### **Why start chlorinating the scheme's water now?**

The Otama Rural Water Scheme Committee and Gore District Council have a responsibility to supply safe and clean drinking water. The Otama scheme was built as a stock water scheme therefore the water is untreated. However, it is the main domestic water supply for a lot of consumers.

Drinking untreated water is a bit like driving without a seatbelt – you may be safe most of the time but when something adverse happens you are completely unprotected.

The Council tests the water source for the scheme, the Pyramid Well, weekly. Most of the time the water is safe to drink although occasionally e-coli is detected. A catchment assessment last year also found there is a very high risk of microbiological contamination to the water source.

Chlorination is considered one of the best way to disinfect the water to protect you, your family and friends.

### **Why use chlorine?**

Chlorine disinfects the water all the way from the intake point to your taps. It also kills small bugs that can get through filtrations systems, such as bacteria and viruses that are difficult to physically remove from water. Other treatment forms, such as UV, only treat everything that goes past it, which means there is a risk of re-infection further down the network.

### **How much chlorine will be used?**

Just enough to keep your water safe. There will be no more than 1mg per litre of water leaving the Pyramid Reservoir. We expect that to drop to about .2mg per litre of water at the extremities of the scheme.

### **How much will it cost?**

It will cost about \$30,000 to install the chlorination equipment, and between \$3000 and \$5000 each year to operate. The Otama scheme has sufficient funds to cover these costs and there will be no increase in charges to scheme consumers.

### **Could the chlorine affect my health?**

No, not at the quantities we will be using. Chlorine has been used safely all over the world for around 120 years. It keeps millions of people – including most of New Zealand – safe from waterborne illness. We have been using chlorine in the Gore and Mataura water supplies for many years.

### **Why does my water smell different?**

The smell is caused by the chlorine reacting with the the natural organics in your tanks and pipelines. The odour should decrease with time as the chlorine removes the organics from the water.

### **I don't like the taste of chlorine – what can I do?**

You have a couple of options.

- Fill a jug of water and leave it on the bench or in your fridge overnight. The chlorine will dissipate naturally over a few hours.
- Install a carbon filter which removes the chlorine.

### **Should I get a water filter?**

We recommend waiting a week or two after chlorination starts before deciding whether you want to install a water filter as any initial smell and taste issues may disappear or at least be less noticeable.

### **Where should I fit a water filter?**

You are best to talk to your plumber about this as it will depend on whether you want to filter the water for your entire home or just at your kitchen sink. Local plumbers are aware of our plans to start chlorinating the scheme.

### **How much do water filters cost?**

Again, it is best to talk to your plumber. Costs for filters can range significantly depending on the type of filter and the installation costs.

### **How will you know the chlorine is effective throughout the entire scheme?**

We will be closely monitoring water quality and initially carry out regular tests at selected sites.

### **Will my stock drink the water?**

Yes it is not uncommon for stock water scheme's to be chlorinated. Nevertheless, it might pay to keep an eye on stock initially as any taste or odour issues will be more prevalent then.

### **What about my pet fish?**

If you have fish in outside ponds you will need to either turn down in-coming water to an absolute trickle (this dilutes the chlorine level to a safe amount for your fish), or fill up drums of water and let them sit for at least 24 hours before using (the UV of the sun evaporates chlorine).

For fish tanks or bowls inside, fill up a container of water and let it sit for at least 24 hours and then only replace 1/3 of this water at a time with what is in the tank already. If you're still worried, you can buy de-chlorinating kits (sodium thiosulfate) at pet supplies stores.

**Will chlorinating the scheme mean it will meet New Zealand Drinking Water Standards?**

No. Chlorinating the water on its own is not enough to meet the requirements of the New Zealand Drinking Water Standards (NZDWS). We are currently investigating the level of treatment required for the scheme to meet national standards. However, these are likely to take some time to implement, hence the decision to chlorinate the scheme in the interim.