

Pacifica Tribune, August 3, 2005

Wandering & Wondering



John Maybury

plier, claims chloramine is safe and suggests the older technology that people were used to was actually less safe. So it may come down to acquired taste for "dirty" water versus the need to accept something new. As they say, you can lead a horse to water, but...

Slurp

When our water company first announced the switch to chloramine, I did my due diligence, read all the articles they sent me, checked out all the Web sites, and concluded that the chlorine-ammonia combo was acceptably and reasonably safe to use, except in my pet piranha's fishbowl. (Nevertheless, I continue to drink only bottled distilled water, which is also great for making coffee and tea. No chloramine-treated water shall ever touch these tonsils.) But seriously, I got just a little bit alarmed when I read both Vi Gotelli's Guest Column last week and a BBC News piece forwarded by Anonymous Bosch. According to the British news source, residents of Skerry in the Scottish district of Sutherland refuse to drink their newly chloraminated water, and even the dogs and cattle of Skerry turn their noses up at the stuff. But Scottish Water, the sup-

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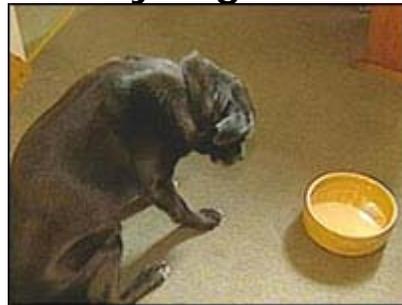
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Tap water 'even snubbed by dogs'

Residents in a Sutherland village have claimed the water quality is so bad even the animals refuse to drink it.



Even dogs refuse to drink the water

Since Scottish Water began treating the tap water with chlorine and ammonia, people in Skerryay have protested, saying it is not fit for consumption.

Although there is no direct link, there has been an increase in skin complaints and residents said dogs and even cattle were turning their noses up at it.

Scottish Water defended the process, insisting the water is safe to drink.

The complaints surfaced after an EU directive forced a £25m upgrade of the water system along the north coast, causing supplies to be switched from a nearby loch.

Residents living near the end of a new 50-mile pipeline in Skerryay have continued to protest over the quality of the water which comes from a state-of-the-art plant in Caithness, where it is treated with chloramines - a mixture of chlorine and ammonia.

Objectors - who have sent a 100-name petition to the parliament in Edinburgh - used to get their water from a nearby loch.

“ Numerous people began to say their animals don't drink it ”

Frances Bowman

Some of the residents, who fear for their health, have now resorted to using a local spring for their supplies.

Frances Bowman - whose dogs will not drink the water - raised her concerns with neighbours, many of whom say the supply is not fit for human consumption.

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She said: "The water tasted so horrible and smells so awful that they just had to go and buy bottled water.

"When I was speaking to them, I noticed there were a number of people who had children with them. They were saying the children used to drink the water straight from the tap."

'Back to the well'

Mrs Bowman added: "Numerous people began to say their animals don't drink it. They would rather go outside and drink from the puddles."

She was supported by fellow-villager Ted Birchall, who said his cows will not touch the water.

"They declined to drink it and were going to a burn. My wife and I were turning our noses up at it as well.

"It had a totally different taste from when we used to get it from our own local loch," he said.

Neighbour Layla Pearson, who now gets a water from a burn, said: "It's a bit like going back to the Dark Ages.

“ The water they've been tasting for decades has now changed and the taste has changed ”

"I thought, with all the modern technology, that we could at least have nice, clean uncontaminated drinking water coming out of the tap.

Atholl Duncan
Scottish Water

"But it seems it's just a little bit too much to ask in these days of being able to have anything at all. We're back to the well."

Scottish Water, however, said the combination of chemicals was more effective at killing harmful bacteria and that the water quality complied with strict regulations aimed at safeguarding public health.

Spokesman Atholl Duncan said: "What we had across the north of Scotland was 11 small water treatment works which were not conforming to modern standards of public health.

"What we did was introduce one new water treatment works with a new method of treatment which will make the whole public water supply for 30,000 people much safer."

He added: "But regrettably, for a handful of those people, it

has caused a taste issue. That's because the water they've been tasting for decades has now changed and the taste has changed."

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