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GUIDELINES FOR THE COLLECTION OF RAINWATER IN TANKS

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With proper management of rainwater tanks and roof catchment, rainwater tanks will provide a supply of soft, non-saline, clear water.

The desirable qualities of this water supply can be maintained by adopting the following procedures.

Reducing Contamination

- Ensure the tank is roofed and interior access holes are provided with a cover.
- Screen the water inlets of the tank, to reduce the introduction of contaminants which would foul or discolour the stored water and contribute to the build-up of sludge.
- Designs of various in-line screens and filtering devices are shown in the attachment.
- Position screens so that they are readily accessible for easy and regular cleaning, particularly where leaves fall onto the water catchment area.
- Screens should be no coarser than 12 x 12 meshes to 25mm²
- Do not use brass or copper screens with galvanised steel tanks as these materials may cause electrolyses which may accelerate corrosion of the tank.
- The first rain after a dry spell will wash dust, bird dropping and other contaminants from the roof catchment area. This polluted water should be discarded and not collected in the tank. As a safe guard, the water can be treated (disinfected) by the addition of 15 grams (¹/₂ oz) of granular calcium hypochlorite (pool chlorine) per 4540 litres (1000 gallons) of water stored in the tank.
- Some paints and roofing materials are unsuitable for use on roof catchments which collect drinking water and should not be used (check manufacturer's instructions and usage).
- Before purchasing any material to be used on roof catchments which collect drinking water, read the manufacturer's recommendations on labels or brochures. Look for warnings. If in doubt, check with the manufacturer.

Exclusion of Mosquitoes

- Ensure that all covers and inlet downpipes are close fitting.
- Fit removable mesh screens to the inlet pipes and the outlet end of the overflow pipe. Mesh screens should not be coarser than 12 x 12 meshes 25m².

Control of Mosquito Larvae (Wrigglers)

- The most effective control is to prevent the female mosquito from entering the tank to lay eggs on the water.
- When the larvae are detected, seal the tank as described previously to prevent the hatched mosquitoes from flying out.

Prevention of Algae Growth

- Exclude as much light as possible as light will stimulate the growth of algae.

Maintenance of the Catchment Area and the Tank

- Regularly clean the gutters of leaves/dirt and other foreign matter.
- Devices which shield leaves (gutter guards) from the guttering should be fitted to the guttering.
- Check that gutters have sufficient fall to prevent “pooling” water. This collected water stimulates the growth of algae and is a potential mosquito breeding source.
- Regularly clean the inlet and overflow pipe screens.
- Periodically rainwater tanks will require desludging depending on the volume of solids which have entered the tank. Tanks should be inspected for sludge build up every 2-3 years.

Disposal of Overflow Water

- Divert overflow water away from the tank, away from buildings or other structures. An accumulation of water in and around buildings can lead to subsidence of the building and or create conditions suitable for termites or weed decay fungi.

For further advice on control of mosquitoes contact Council's Environmental Health Officer on (08) 8832 0000. If you require cleaning of your rainwater tank look under “Tank Cleaning” in the Yellow Pages.

