

CAPS Water Testing

Updated, November 2021

CAPS REQUIRES an annual water **only from farms with water from a private source** (well, spring, etc.) that comes in contact, post-harvest, with produce destined for sale (for washing, cooling, cleaning, sorting, etc.). Water tests essential info:

- The minimum water test standard is “0 cfu* of E.coli” bacteria in a 200 ml sample (this is consistent with FSMA’s PSR). Uploaded test result for the calendar year is due annually, by July 15, if you need a test **
- The **presence of E. coli bacteria** in a source-water test will **prevent a farm from attaining CAPS accreditation**. (* cfu = colony forming units).
- The presence of **coliform bacteria**, although a potential problem that should be resolved, will NOT prevent a farm from attaining CAPS accreditation.
- If you use municipal water on produce, you do not need to test it.
- If post-harvest water never touches any produce for sale, testing is recommended, but NOT required.

Further Instructions and Explanation:

The [VT Department of Health water testing lab](#) (shown in action below) is open, and is the least expensive, and now most convenient way for most CAPS farms to test their water.



If you need/want a test from the VT DOH, you **MUST** get the sample there **DAY-OF** or **OVERNIGHT**. The easiest thing to do is:

1. Pick up the phone and call the lab at **802 338 4724**, and

2. have them send you a one or more “NU drinking water kits” for \$15/each.
Descriptions of the drinking water tests and instructions [are HERE](#). “NU” test returns the actual number of CFUs “colony forming units” in a 200ml sample. This number gives you more information, if you get a positive result.
3. Collect sample Mon-Thurs mornings, and **deliver to the NEW carrier drop by in each Vermont county by required time** ([See FORM HERE](#))
<https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/PHL-water-drop-off.pdf>
4. or mail or currier the sample overnight to the sample overnight to
Vermont Department of Health Laboratory,
PO Box 1125, Burlington, VT 05402-1125 ,
5. Or ...Drop the sample, same day (Mon-Fri) at their lab in Colchester, (359 South Park Drive, Colchester, VT 05446)

* [Green Mountain Messenger](#) can be a significantly less expensive overnight option, depending on where you live, so check them out if you plan to overnight mail your sample. USPS overnight is around \$25, GMM could be around \$10 less.

[Endyne Labs](#) are twice the price per test (\$30), but a good alternative, with lab locations in Lebanon and Williston. They also have a limited [free currier service throughout the region](#) which can make the cost competitive with state lab fee plus overnight shipping (\$30 to \$45 per sample depending on whether or not you have the empty sample bottles sent).

As always, Feel free to Contact me (CAPS Coordinator Hans Estrin) via email or text (hestrin@uvm.edu, 802 380 2109) with any questions or concerns.

**** Please note:** If your sample tests positive for coliform, that means that some amount of soil has contaminated your sample. This could be caused by a problem with your well, spring, or water line, which could lead to further contamination. Thus, it is important to inspect and potentially repair or remedy the contamination (e.g. take a year to resolve via resampling, well shocking). See the VT DOH Instructions for well and spring [disinfection HERE](#).

