Nebraskans with private water wells can have their drinking water screened for nitrates during Husker Harvest Days in Grand Island on Sept. 11-13.

To find out the nitrate level in the water they drink, well owners can bring a cup-size sample of water in a clean container to the new Natural Resources Building, Lot # 1106 on the southeast side of the Husker Harvest grounds, East Avenue and Second Street. Samples can be brought on Tuesday and Wednesday between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., and on Thursday between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. There is no charge for the screening, and well owners can get the results while they wait.

“Because of the drought conditions across the state, I recommend that people who have experienced declines in the water tables in their wells have their water tested for nitrates,” said Jack Daniel, administrator of the Office of Drinking Water and Environmental Health at the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

Nitrates are a concern for infants under six months of age and pregnant women, as well as anyone who has a compromised immune system.

High levels of nitrates interfere with the blood’s ability to carry oxygen and can cause “blue baby” syndrome.

Livestock, especially cattle and hogs, are also susceptible to nitrate poisoning. In cattle it results in lower milk production and loss of calves, in hogs it results in loss of piglets.

The screening is sponsored by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Division of Public Health. For more information contact the Water Well Standards Program at (402) 471-0546.

The Office of Drinking Water and Environmental Health is a promotional partner with the National Ground Water Association for “Protect Your Groundwater Day” on Tuesday, Sept. 11. The focus of “Protect Your Groundwater Day” is to bring awareness to protecting the most important drinking water source–groundwater.