

Module 6: Community Health

Topic 1 Content: Water Quality and Health

Introduction



Even though two-thirds of the planet is covered with water, less than one percent of that water is accessible fresh water. Therefore, water is an essential resource that must be protected to ensure human health. Unfortunately, accessible drinking water is not equally distributed throughout the world. When droughts and disappearing water sources make availability of water even more scarce, serious political conflict can result from disputes over water resources. Click each of the thumbnails below to learn more about major water pollutants.

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Wastewater



Wastewater

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Animal Agriculture

A graphic with a blue background. At the top, the text "Water Quality and Health" is written in white. Below this, the text "Animal Agriculture" is written in black. Underneath, a paragraph of text explains that animal agriculture is a common source of pollution in rivers and streams, mentioning manure, oxygen-depleting substances, ammonia, pathogens, and nitrates. At the bottom, there are three circular images: the first shows water being poured from a faucet, the second shows a group of black and white cows, and the third shows a polluted body of water with brown and blue patches.

Water Quality and Health

Animal Agriculture

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the most common source of pollution in rivers and streams is animal agriculture. For example, animal manure contains oxygen-depleting substances and ammonia that can cause fish kills and reduce biodiversity. In ground water, pathogens and nitrates from manure can pollute drinking water and harm human health.

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Oil



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Oil

Accidental spills from oil tankers and offshore drilling can pollute large bodies of water and result in the deaths of a wide range of wildlife. Oil spills are difficult to clean and can take several years to recover from. However, you can take small steps to prevent oil from polluting water sources by never pouring oil down the drain or onto the ground where it can enter the water supply.



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