Breaux Bridge water safe despite worms

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BREAUX BRIDGE — Water in Breaux Bridge is safe to drink, even though worms were found in it last week, a city official said here Thursday.

The worms apparently have been eliminated, but they pose no threat to human health even if they haven't, said Raymond Guidry, Breaux Bridge city manager.

Guidry said laboratory tests showed that the worms were the larvae of the midge fly. The flies apparently got through screens over the water treatment system's holding tanks and laid eggs in the water, Guidry said.

He said the worms were found last Friday afternoon in three residences on Wild Cherry Lane.

Guidry said state health department test results, released Thursday morning, determined that the city's water supply is free of harmful bacteria. And as unpleasant as worm-infested water might be, Guidry said, the tests also show that the worms pose no health threat.

One resident living along the street said her children found the worms coming from the bathtub faucet Friday when the water was running.

The woman, who asked not to be identified, said the worms were thin, red and about a half-inch long.

"They looked like hookworms," she said.

The woman said her family stopped drinking the water after last Friday, but she's not sure if they'll again start drinking the water now.

"I don't know. I'll have to think about it," she said.

She said the water has improved since the city began flushing the system's lines. A strong odor has been eliminated, she said.

Another resident on Wild Cherry, who also didn't want to be named, said her family never stopped drinking the water because they didn't find any worms in it. Occasionally, the woman said, the water has a yellow tinge.

"Then we don't use it," she said.

Frank Newland, manager of Hebert's Supermarket in Breaux Bridge, said his store has experienced a slight increase in bottled water sales in the past few days.

"We still have some though," Newland said.

Guidry said he will continue drinking Breaux Bridge water.

"I've been drinking it all along. I never did stop," he said. "Of course, I might be a little bit cautious, and when I get it out of the tap I look at it."

He said the water also was cloudy after last Friday, but that apparently was the result of work being done in an attempt to find the source of the worm infestation. Most of the cloudiness was because of lime and alum, he said.

He said it's not known why the worms were found in only three households.

The city always has received favorable test results in the monthly sampling of the water system by state health officials, Guidry said.

Even so, efforts to keep the water lines free of anything undesirable have been increased, he said. All screens in the system have been replaced, the lines will be flushed more frequently, and the amount of chlorine used to purify the water has been increased, Guidry said.

"We don't want that happening again," he said.