

Frequently Asked Questions for Auditors

Q1. In my province, the provincial standards for potable water are different from the CanadaGAP requirement of 0 total coliforms and 0 *E. coli*. Do I have to meet the CanadaGAP requirement (Canadian Drinking Water Standard), or do I follow my provincial standards?

- A. Usually it would depend on which is the stricter requirement and this would need to be followed. However, in this case you cannot get stricter than the Canadian Drinking Water Standard of 0 total coliforms and 0 *E. coli*. If the provincial standard is less than 0 and 0, then the requirement within the manual to follow the Canadian Drinking Water Standard supersedes your provincial standard and must be met.

Q2. What if my accredited lab is not able to report the test results as 0 total coliforms and 0 *E. coli*? The lab told me that they can only report total coliforms as "less than 10" or "less than 1". What does this mean, and is it acceptable?

- A. When water test results are reported as <10 total coliforms per 100mL of water or <1 total coliforms per 100 mL of water, this is based on the sensitivity of the testing method and the dilution rate used in the accredited lab. The lab can only detect results to <10 or <1 total coliforms per 100mL of water; they cannot give a more specific reading. This essentially means that no organisms were found in the test but there is a possibility that if a larger sample were used (1000 mL vs. 100 mL of water) they may have found something.

Results reported this way are acceptable and the water is considered potable.

If your accredited lab uses the method where they can actually give a number under 10 (e.g., 7 total coliforms), then results above 0 are not acceptable and the water is not potable based on the Canadian Drinking Water Standard.

The lab must report total coliforms using one of these two options (i.e., either an exact number such as 5, OR a "less than" count). It is not acceptable for the lab to report the results simply as "acceptable" or "negative", since this prevents comparing the value to the Canadian Drinking Water Standard.

Q3. If my accredited lab uses the more sensitive method (i.e., reports an exact number of total coliforms) and the water test results are not 0 total coliforms and 0 *E.coli*, will I autofail the audit?

- A. It depends on what the water is used for. Review the Water (for Fluming and Cleaning) and Ice section question #3 within the audit checklist. Water uses highlighted in yellow will result in an autofail if at least one good (0 total coliforms, 0 *E. coli*) water test is not available.