

# SEPTIC TIMES

2004

www.effluent.co.nz

ISSUE 2

## REAL ESTATE



A 'survey' conducted on thirty property owners who had listed their property 'FOR SALE' offering to empty out their septic tank revealed that only two were interested in cleaning their tanks for the new owners. What ever happened to common decency. What's sadder is that when we brought it up with Real Estate Agents - most said THEY DIDN'T CARE! One even went so far as to say, "When someone spends \$500,000 on a property, another \$500 to get the tank cleaned was not worth worrying about".

Try telling that to clients who have just over-committed themselves on a \$500,000 property, believing that interest rates would never go up!

HINT: If you are thinking of purchasing a property – consider adding the following clause in the 'Special Conditions' section:

"This agreement is conditional upon the vendor obtaining a Septic System Report from a reputable effluent disposal company, detailing recent cleanings and outlining the condition of the tank and effluent field where possible."

A clause similar to this will at the very least inform you whether the tank has been looked after and whether you can expect possible costs in repairs or maintenance.

Furthermore, this issue has become of extreme importance for properties under 2,500m<sup>2</sup> that fall under Environment Waikato's 'Rules for On-site Wastewater Discharges' 3.5.7.4, which stipulates that "Should the treatment and/or disposal system fail to the extent that more than routine maintenance such as de-sludging and filter cleaning is required to re-instate the system, it will no longer comply... and should be upgraded..." This would

mean an entirely new effluent system – tank and field, engineered to meet the conditions of Rules 3.5.7.5 or 3.5.7.6.

A significant investment on top of the purchase price – one I believe Real Estate agents would be reluctant to fund out of their fee.

An advertisement for Effluent Services Limited. It features a cartoon bear character wearing a blue cap and overalls, holding a small object. The text includes "SEPTIC TANK SERVICE" in a yellow banner, "Phone Richard 0800 333 583 0800 EFFLUENT", and "EFFLUENT SERVICES LIMITED" in a red banner. The website "www.effluent.co.nz" is listed at the bottom.

## Phew! Who did THAT?

Picture this! You're doing the laundry, wander through the door with a basket of clothes heading for the clothesline and *WHOA! What on earth IS that smell?*

As the laundry water rushes into your septic tank, an equal volume of liquid must exit the tank at the opposite end - and if that end is blocked or not flowing as it should, the tank begins to fill up and pushes air out of the mushroom.

Oh, by the way, that's not really air. Uh uh! Dem der's dat real bad smellin' stuff called 'gas'.

Blocked Effluent Lines caused by lack of tank maintenance, and clogged Effluent Fields resulting from high household water usage, are the most common causes for the bad odour.

Pumping the tank at the earliest signs of trouble, or at best, periodically every 2 years, will reduce the probability of lasting and costly damage to your effluent system.

SETTING THE STANDARD

# How a Septic Tank works - Part 2

Does Size Matter?

Small tanks are a thing of the past and are being replaced by bigger tanks on both new and existing properties.

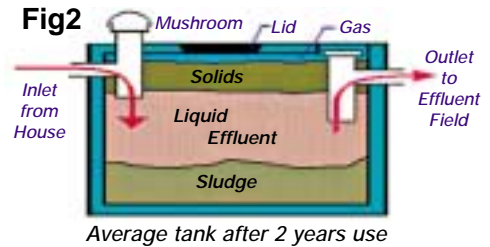
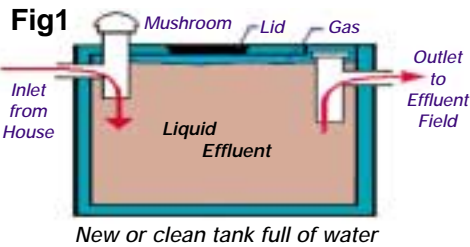
All liquid household waste (effluent) needs to remain in the tank for a period of upto 48hrs to allow for solids (biosolids) to settle from the effluent. This period of settling helps to avoid suspended matter from entering the effluent field which may cause damage or blockage.

However modern technology through appliances has increased household water consumption enormously. As such the requirement upon the sewerage system has also increased resulting in the need for larger size tanks to retain household waste for that vital settling period - 48hrs.

With this in mind and regardless of the tank size, the increase in solids stored within the tank through time, is inversely proportional to the available time for settlement of biosolids from the effluent to occur.

This means, that although a tank may be new and large; if it's capacity is sufficient to retain household wastes for a period of upto 48hrs when empty of solids - after 2 years when it is half full of solids - the effluent will have only half the time in the tank needed for complete settlement to occur.

At this stage, solid matter will be exiting the tank into the effluent field. Therefore, pumping out your tank every two years is essential to ensure maximum solids retention and long life for your effluent field.



## Tank of the month

Good old "Kiwi ingenuity" made life absolutely miserable for a couple on Kentucky Rd.

Their recently purchased property was losing points big time, as each time the laundry was done or the bathroom was used - a horrible odour enveloped the property.

So bad was the odour, that care needed to be taken not to use the facilities if visitors were expected.

Finally, out of much frustration and embarrassment, Effluent Services were called to solve the mystery and remedy any problems.

Hardly CSI material! What had happened was that the previous owner had the misfortune of having a blocked effluent field and decided to take matters into his own hands and seek a cheap solution.

A few pieces of left-over drain-pipe cleverly inserted into the inlet line of the septic tank - diverted past the tank; a nearby bank to one side of the property (up-wind as luck would have it) with adequate fall for run-off, and hey presto - no more problem septic tank!

(Although there are countries that allow raw household sewage to run over the nearest embankment - this behaviour is seriously frowned upon here in NZ).

The cost to the new owner; a new effluent field, a new inlet and outlet to the septic tank and one objectionable mess to clean up.

Of course - there's a moral to this story: if you are purchasing a property - request a report on the effluent system from a reputable effluent disposal company (see overleaf) detailing recent cleanings and outlining the condition of the tank and effluent field where possible.

## TIME TO CLEAN YOUR TANK WHEN ...

- you detect a foul odour around the tank;
- there is sewage coming out the mushroom or gully trap;
- the toilet/shower/sink is not flowing away as quickly as it should;
- you are selling your property;
- you've just bought a property not knowing whether the tank was cleaned;
- you've just had the Warriors around for a weekend of R&R.

## The scoop on Poop

A large portion of the average stool is made up of water. Of course, this value is highly variable - the water content of diarrhoea is much higher, and the amount of water in a stool that has been retained (voluntarily or otherwise) is lower.

Water is absorbed through the intestinal wall out of the faecal matter as it passes through the intestine. ie. More time in the intestine makes for a drier stool.

## Baffle them with effluent

User pays strikes yet another blow as Council increases Septic Waste Disposal rates.

The formula used to derive the new charges reads like this:

$$\text{\$charge} = \text{Vtwi}(\text{V}\$/\text{Vt}) + \text{Vtwi} * \text{SStwi}(\text{SS}\$/\text{SSt}) + \text{Vtwi} * \text{BODtwi}(\text{BOD}\$/\text{BODt}) - \text{\$R}\$/\text{d}$$

Right now you're asking yourself, "did the guy who came up with this formula work for NASA?" Well, we don't know - but Nasa has presented us with a complimentary one-way ticket to give to him.

In a world where we are taxed more and more for the unimaginable and the incomprehensible - this formula relates to the length of time the sewage is in the tank, the volume of the tank and quantity of solids in the tank.

I know what you are thinking! But no - we are not allowed to dump it on their door-step. And by the way, Environment Waikato seriously frowns upon pumping your septic waste onto your tomato patch or the neighbours paddock.

We do live in "septic times" - don't we?

## POO FOR THOUGHT !

Why is it that breast fed baby's poo is "Karitane Yellow" when everyone else's is normally brown?

Effluent Services is totally committed to the management of all Domestic & Industrial Liquid Waste with a strong emphasis on Environmental and Health & Safety policy.

To update your knowledge on your septic system or for further information on Effluent Services and how we can be of assistance to you, visit us at:

[www.effluent.co.nz](http://www.effluent.co.nz)

# FREE

FREE TANK CLEAN FOR THIS ISSUE:  
B & R Corbett  
364 Racecourse Road

### Remember!

If you have just purchased a property not having given thought to the effluent system - get it cleaned now. It can save you all the expense and bother of things going wrong.

**EFFLUENT SERVICES**  
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**SETTING THE STANDARD**

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**CAUTION TO HOME OWNERS  
AND HOME BUYERS:**

The information herein and in future prints is general in nature. Since conditions and requirements vary considerably between individual sites, always obtain qualified expert advice pertaining to the specific system about which you may have questions.

**Waikato  
Water**  
& Cartage

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[www.effluent.co.nz](http://www.effluent.co.nz)

**QUOTABLE QUOTE**  
**Only dead fish go with the flow**

*"Never kick a fresh turd on a hot day"*  
Harry S Truman

**MANY THANKS** to those who contributed to this issue of **SEPTIC TIMES**.

ALL ENQUIRIES/ARTICLES TO:  
THE EDITOR, SEPTIC TIMES, PO BOX 440, CAMBRIDGE