

October 13, 2019

Sanitation and Hygiene

More Deadly than Starvation

Most of us have grown up with in-door plumbing that brings us fresh, potable water at just the turn of the tap. Not only that, but we have hot water on demand, and water-flushable toilets that simply carry away things that may cause illness and disease. Few of us have ever known anyone personally who has had cholera, typhoid, hepatitis, or dysentery.

We are truly blessed to have modern systems that safeguard our health. However, all of that could change instantly in the event of disaster. In fact, because most people in modern America have never learned how to properly take care of waste any other way than what they know now, we could be at greater risk of death and disease if these systems broke down than people who have grown up with much less than we have. We often hear of disasters, but we seldom hear of the secondary disasters like bacterial contamination that occur because of bacterial infection in the affected areas. In New Orleans this was an especially horrific problem.

The real concern comes in the fact that you can be prepared and be very careful yourself, but if one person around you is not following best hygiene practices, everyone else is still at risk. Some people think it is fine to leave waste on an empty lot, in a gully, or on a hillside like people leave shopping carts at random places in a parking lot. They never stop to consider that others will have to deal with their irresponsible choices and it may

result in more than an inconvenience. Others believe that all will be well if they just set up an outhouse in an emergency. They do not realize that most of the diseases mentioned above were prevalent in the days of outhouses, and we live much closer together now.

One of the most horrifying stories I have heard was of an emergency preparedness specialist telling people in her ward that if there was an earthquake and the sewer system was broken people could just set up a little tent over the nearest manhole and use that hole as their outhouse—no digging necessary. She did not take into account how difficult that would be to clean up later, or how easily vermin could transport contamination into all the homes in the neighborhood from such a location. She didn't think about the smell it would generate or the fact that broken sewer lines can cause raw sewage to back up into basements of anyone living downhill from others still using the lines, making their homes totally uninhabitable.

Sometimes emergency response organizations will set up portable potties (different than an outhouse), but it can take two days to two weeks to have these in place, and the closest one may be two miles away with a long waiting line. With this in mind it is best to be prepared and know what to do. On the issue of sanitation, you cannot afford to be ignorant and uninformed! It is vital to know what to do even in small disasters. This does not need to be an expensive piece of preparation, and we do not have to have a disaster for you to use and need something like this. In fact, I have given my “emergency potty kit” away twice to people who have had sewer problems or those having to shut off water for plumbing problems in their home. You should have a basic kit and you should know how to use it! There are options sold at emergency preparedness stores. However, it is not expensive to put an adequate kit together yourself.

\$5.00 Potty Kit

- 4–5 gallon bucket with a lid from the bakery section of a grocery store. (These may be free for the asking or may cost you \$1.00 if they have one available. You will probably need to clean it out.)

- 1 long foam noodle used in a swimming pool. (One from a dollar store is adequate.)
- 1 small roll of duct tape from \$ store
- 1 pkg of toilet paper from \$ store + an old phone book if you can add that
- 1 container of hand sanitizer from the \$ store

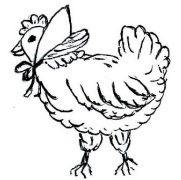
Here is how this works:

1. With a razor blade, cut a slit down the pool noodle from the outside to the hollow center the whole length of the noodle.
2. Push the slit you just made onto the rim of the bucket so that the noodle clings to the edge of the bucket all the way around. Cut the noodle off when the two ends meet so that they fit together nicely to form a padded bucket edge. Once you have the noodle prepared to the right size you can remove it.
3. Put all of your things, including the noodle, in the bucket and put the lid on. You can just pick up the bucket and have it ready to use when you need it.
4. If you find you need the bucket, remove the contents and put the noodle padding back around the rim and use the duct tape to fasten the two ends together to keep them in place.
5. After each use it is a good idea to cover what you left with organic matter like dried grass clippings, dried leaves, saw dust, peat moss, straw, or coco coir. *Your bucket will be most efficient if it is only used for solid waste, with liquid waste or urine being stored and disposed of separately.
6. Urine can be dumped directly on to dirt in an appropriate place if dumped often. Solid waste should be properly buried or taken to an approved dump station. If you have a deep hole with a board and rocks on the top, it will hold several bucket dumps before you need to fill and properly cover it with a lime mixture. If it is winter and you can't dig a hole you should keep the waste in bags in a heavy (preferably metal) garbage can that you keep closed with a bungee cord until it can be picked up or the ground thaws-whichever comes first.
7. Be sure to wash and/or sanitize your hands after use or care of this kit.

Here are some upgrades you may want to consider if you don't need to stay in a budget.

- A taller, sturdier bucket with a screw on lid such as those carried at home improvement stores (This can make the kit \$12.00 more)
- A bag of coconut coir (about \$15.00 in the garden section—It's condensed)
- A plastic drink/water dispenser with a switch on spout (small ones in \$ stores in spring)
- Soap
- Heavy-duty garbage bags
- A second bucket or container so that you can keep solid and liquid waste separate. This simplifies taking care of the waste and greatly lessens the odor in the long run.
- A metal garbage can with the right length bungee cords to secure the lid (You can store other supplies in it if needed)

Notes from Red Hen



Dear Red,

This has been a strange year. Our gardens have not grown well and we have had a lot of bugs.

While the bugs have been fine eating they didn't help us in an effort to store a winter supply. The other thing that has been troubling us is the itch. We are all so itchy we don't know what to do. Have you ever experienced this? I wrote to Aunt Bitty, but she didn't have an answer. She just said to bath in water more often and not the dust baths so many birds like to take in the summer. I would love to hear how things are on your farm. You always have such fun news.

— Love, Cousin Speckle