

**October 9, 1991**

## **Unwanted Guests - Residents find parasites in tap water - Heritage Newspapers/The News Herald**

**by Carol Baldwin**  
Staff Writer

SOUTHGATE - Parasitical worms were found in the water at two homes on Netherwood last week after a malfunctioning lawn sprinkler coupled with a watermain break sucked the nematodes into the water system.

The nematodes first showed up the evening of Oct. 1 after the backflow prevention system on the privately owned underground sprinkler malfunctioned.

Stan Jarski, the City's Department of Public Services (DPS) director, said Monday that water samples taken since then have been tested by both Detroit and Wyandotte's water departments and have come back negative for bacteria and are safe. "We got good clean samples from Detroit and Wyandotte," he said. "The Wayne County Health Department determined that an atmospheric vacuum breaker had malfunctioned and was in the open position. We had a water main break, and that caused a vacuum in the system."

When the water pressure dropped, the vacuum in the system sucked some water from the sprinkler into the city water, but was only distributed to two homes, according to Jarski.

He said DPS crews purged the water system and blew out hydrants for three blocks north and south of Netherwood to eliminate the nematodes.

Homeowner Jerry Blick found the worms swimming around in his bathtub when he started filling the tub for his child. He said he was appalled to find the critters, as well as rust and other debris, in his water.

"This happened Tuesday and I was still getting living things in the water Wednesday night," Blick said. "It's disgusting. If these have always been in the lines, then how come no one's ever seen them before?"

"The only reason I noticed it is because I have children and was giving my kid a bath. If you have a screen on your faucet or you were taking a shower, you wouldn't see it."

Jarski explained that the nematodes never would have found their way into the water if the sprinkler's backflow mechanism had worked properly.

He said the contractor who installed the sprinkler system didn't pull a city permit and used a "cheap" atmospheric vacuum breaker, and when it malfunctioned, which was at the time of the water main break, the nematodes were pulled right in.

"You can get a cheaper price, but it can cost you in the long run," Jarski said.

He said the resident who owns the sprinkler would be cited by the county for improper installation.

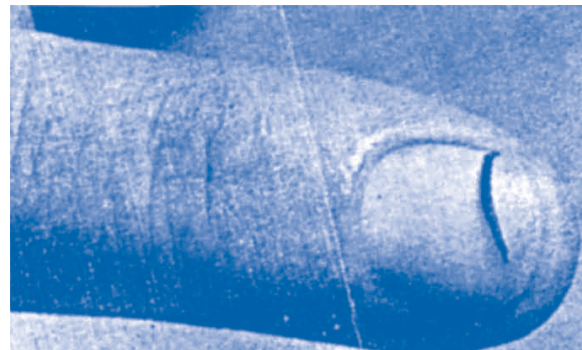
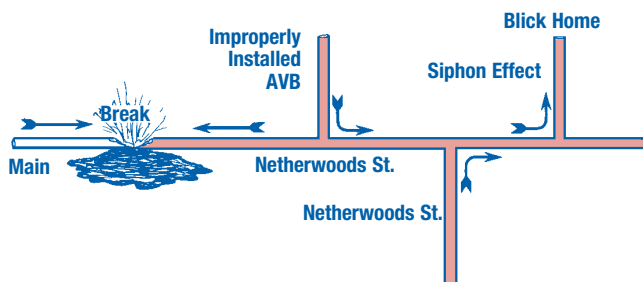
"This is nothing the system did," Jarski said. "We can monitor pressure and chlorine, but we're limited."

Blick said he tested the water for chlorine, and there was none in it when the nematodes first showed up.

Jarski said a pool tester will not pick-up traces of chlorine in tap water. He said the DPS tested for chlorine on Netherwood and two blocks away and it was a "perfect situation."

Blick said he thinks the city is trying to "candy coat" the problem and he's not buying the scenario presented by the DPS. He wants the water main replaced.

Jarski said the problem shouldn't happen again if residents have their sprinkler systems checked by professionals.



### EDITORIAL NOTE:

As it sometimes occurs the whole story does not always make its way into print. We felt it was important to clarify some of the newspaper article's points on the backside of the brochure. The AVBs were installed in violation of the local codes, which require a minimum of a PVB (800 Series). Furthermore, the installer did not follow the recommended installation procedures. The AVBs were installed on their sides, they were piped with continuous supply pressure and had control valves downstream.

This installation caused the seat disc to stick in the open position to the seat and applied backpressure to the valve. This irrigation system was ultimately left with only an expensive elbow.

Local codes should always be checked for valve selection and the proper installation criteria followed (see below). Fortunately, although shaken, the Blicks were reassured by further tests that revealed that the species of nematode was not indeed a parasite.

\*Permission Granted by: WATTS Regulator  
Watts Industries, Inc.