



CLIPPINGS a weekly column from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

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For Immediate Release

Tips for Preventing Water Problems in Homes and Buildings

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Iowa's High Point sits at 1,670 feet above sea level north of Sibley on Highway 60, and the Sterler farmhouse there gets a wet basement. Wet basements and high water tables are nothing new to most Iowans, but there are things that everyone can do to minimize water in basements and around livestock buildings.

Iowa has the best soil in the world and it has a high infiltration rate that soaks right in at over 2 inches per hour in many cases, especially when grass is growing. The drainable soil pores often are only 5 percent of the soil volume, meaning that 1 inch of excess rainfall will raise the water table by 2 feet when the conditions are near saturated.

Homeowners and farmers can fix most water issues by following these simple tips.

First, make sure that the soil slopes away from the foundation. Soil settles, and erosion can leave a pool next to the foundation inviting extra water down to the basement. Make sure that there is at least a 6-inch fallaway from the foundation in the first six feet to prevent this problem.

Second, the gutter system of the house must deliver the water away from the house at least six feet and have a sloping path away from the buildings.

Third, plan for wet years. While most of Northwest Iowa has an average rainfall of 25 to 30 inches a year, twice the normal rainfall occurred in 2018 and 1993. Rainfall for May 2019 was two times the normal 5 inches in most locations.

Perimeter tile should be part of any new construction with an outlet to a field tile or a sump hole that can handle the wet years. The outlet from a sump pump should go into the storm drains or surface ditches where it has a path to the drainage ditch, creek or river. Pumping next to the house will just let it come right back in.

Keeping water out of our homes and livestock buildings protects us from costly damage in wet years.

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