

Sampling guidelines for *Water FLUTE* systems

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Water level in the liner.

The liner water level should be 10 ft above the highest formation water level to provide a good seal of the liner in the hole (5 ft minimum excess head). The formation water level can be measured via the “pump tube” for each port. The water level inside the liner should be tagged in the ½” id tube labeled “TAG” adjacent to the sampling tubes. If the water level inside the liner is measured in the liner, outside the Tag Tube, lower the weighted tag line very slowly to avoid damage to the liner. Water can be added to the liner by simply pouring water into the liner or through the TAG tube, whichever is easier. Do not fill the liner more than 10 ft above the highest formation water level. The water level in the liner should be checked prior to each sampling episode. (Beware that filling the liner with de-ionized water can give a false water level reading.)

Water flow

The water flow into the pumping system is shown in Fig. 1. Water flows from the formation through the spacer pore space, through the port tube, through the first check valve, and fills the “pump tube”. The “sample tube” is also filled at the same time. The water level rises in the pump tube to the water table for that port.

Setting up the gas pressure source

The water is pumped with gas pressure. The FLUTE pump design is such that there is very low risk of aeration of the sample. The gas source is usually a nitrogen bottle with a regulator for setting the prescribed driving pressure. The arrangement of the FLUTE gas drive system is shown in Fig. 2. The regulator is set to the proper gas pressure defined later by closing the three way valve to prevent gas flow out of the quick connect fitting. The pressure gauge on the FLUTE pump driver is much more sensitive than the regulator for setting the regulator pressure. The FLUTE pump driver must be securely connected to the regulator at the normal ¼” NPT connection on the regulator outlet.

The regulator is attached to the top fitting on the gas bottle (a special nitrogen regulator fitting connects to a nitrogen bottle). Turn the pressure regulator handle counter-clockwise until it moves freely (the no pressure position). Rotate the main valve on the regulator (nearer the bottle) clockwise to fully closed. Open the valve on the bottle (counter clockwise). The main bottle pressure gauge on the regulator will rise to the bottle pressure. Close the regulator valve (clockwise) until the pressure starts to rise on the pressure gauge on the FLUTE pump driver (three way valve closed with no flow out of the quick connect). Adjust the regulator to the desired pressure for purging, provided by FLUTE. Connect the quick connect to the top fitting of the pump tube (see Fig. 2). Open the three way valve to drive the water out of the pump.

Purging

Water is pumped from the tubing by applying the gas pressure to the interface at the static water level in the pump tube (Fig. 1 and 2). The water is driven down in the pump tube and up through the second check valve to the surface via the sample tube. By driving the water with a sufficient gas pressure (the “recommended purge pressure”) to drive all of the water in the pump tube and the sample tube to the surface, the water in the pump tubing is nearly all expelled. The purge stroke is complete when gas is expelled from the sample tube following the water flow. The pressure in the system must then be vented (i.e., dropped to atmospheric by turning the three way valve to the vent position), to allow the pump tube to refill by flow via the port tube. The recharge flow from the port tube consists of the port tube water, the water in the pore space of the spacer, and water from the medium. Because of the relatively large volume in the pump tube, most of the recharge is from the medium. The recharge will take about as long as the first purge stroke. However, a low conductivity medium will require more time.

Purging the pump tube a second time will remove any of the water that has resided in the spacer and port tube volume. That is highly recommended, since the water resident in the tubing and spacer is probably not typical of the formation water. If the refill has been prompt, the second purge water volume will be similar to the first stroke. If in doubt, or if in a sedimentary formation or screened well, a third purge stroke is recommended to remove water that may have been in long contact with the liner or spacer.

Sampling

The sampling flow is best driven on the third (or fourth) cycle by a “recommended sampling pressure” which is less than that needed to drive gas through the bottom of the pump tube. The pressure recommended is that which will drive the water to near, but not out of, the bottom of the large tube. That recommended pressure, “the sampling pressure,” is calculated in the spreadsheet provided with each system. The pressure regulator is set to the sample pressure, which is lower than the purge pressure. Opening the three way valve will now apply the sample pressure to the system causing flow from the sample tube.

The first flow of the sampling cycle sweeps along droplets of water left in the tubing from the purge cycle. That residual water is depleted of volatile components. Tests have shown that the first tube volume of the sample flow should be discarded as depleted in volatiles (the “discard volume” is also calculated in the spreadsheet). Thereafter, the samples can be collected from the sample tube outflow. The volume to be discarded is shown in the spreadsheet as “discard volume”. The sample tube water flow rate will start fast, then slow, and finally stop. That occurs as the water column being driven approaches the applied pressure/head. The typical sampling pressure drives to within 25 ft. of the bottom of the pump tube (the U). The large buffer zone remaining in the pump tube assures against aeration of the sample.

This procedure should provide an ample sample of good quality drawn directly from the formation.

Caution: If the pumping system refills very slowly, there may not be sufficient water in the pump to fill the “sample tube” to the surface when the stroke is performed. In that case, there will be spitting of gas from the sample water and it will be followed by a flow of gas only. The sample water should never show “spitting” and the stroke should never end with gas flow from the sample tube. The proper sample flow will slow until it stops flowing. Should this evidence of insufficient recharge be observed, allow the pump to refill for a longer time and repeat the sample stroke. One can

tag the water level in the large tube, as described in the head measurement procedure, to assure that the pumping system has been sufficient refilled.

Measuring the head in the system

The water level in the large tubes may not be the current water level. After sampling, if there is any leakage of the second check valve (sand in the tube, etc...) the water in the sample tube can backflow into the larger tube, adding to the water that fills the large tube during the recharge. Also, if the water level in the formation is dropping between head measurements, the water level in the pump tube will not follow the descent if the first check valve is a good seal. For these two reasons, and for the freezing concern below, it is best to finish the sampling stroke by raising the pressure to the “purge pressure” value to purge the pumping system of all water. Then upon refilling, the level is the current head for each port. If head measurements are made between sampling events, each port’s pumping system should be first be purged to allow the tubing to refill to the current head value.

If the water might freeze in the sampling tubing near the surface, purge the entire volume of water from each sampling line, after sampling, before leaving it. Use the recommended purge pressure to remove all water, not the sampling pressure. **Each line should be blowing gas when the purge is complete.** If the lines were purged after sampling for head measurements, that is sufficient.

If the Water FLUTE uses PVDF tubing, the purge of the entire system after sampling should not be neglected, even if head measurements are not to be made. This removes the water column in the sampling tube. For deep water tables, the long term pressure of the standing water in the sampling tube might lead to excessive creep of the tubing which is susceptible to “cold flow”, a characteristic of Teflon like materials. (This is not a concern except for very deep water tables (>300 ft).

In most cases, the performance of a final purge of the system after sampling is useful, even if not essential.

Simultaneous purge and sampling of all tubes

The FLUTE pumping system for each port is essentially identical in length, pump volume and elevation in the hole. This allows all ports to be purged and sampled simultaneously for a great saving in sampling time. The only

difference for simultaneous sampling is that the pressure source must include a tube to each port fitting at the wellhead. FLUTE offers a manifold pump driver system at extra cost (the single port driver is provided with the Water FLUTE). The recommended purge and sample pressures are the same as used for single port sampling.

In some cases, the buoyancy of the sampling system is so great when emptied of water during the simultaneous purge that the tubing bundle can cause the liner to invert. The sampling volume spreadsheet provided with the liner notes whether the system can be purged simultaneously. This is only a problem for smaller hole diameters, many ports, and a small excess head in the liner. However, increasing the excess head in the liner to overcome the buoyancy of the tubing can be a hazard to the liner.

A short summary is provided as the following checklist:

Check List

1. Check/restore the water level in the liner.
2. Connect the gas driver source to the gas drive tube for the port.
3. Set the regulator to the recommended purge pressure.
4. Expel the tube water at the suggested purge pressure. Collect the purged water volume for verification of a good purge. Note the water flow time of the purge stroke.
5. Allow the tubing to refill. Repeat the purge. Collect the purge volume to assure the amount removed is at least the “port tube volume”. Was the refill long enough?
6. Purge a third time, if desired.
7. Allow the tubing to refill for the sample stroke.
8. Reduce the driving pressure to the “sampling pressure”. Apply the pressure and collect the first flow to measure the discard volume. Discard that water.
9. Reduce the pressure, if needed, to slow the flow and collect the samples.
10. Perform a final purge of the water out of the sampling lines by raising the driving pressure to the purge pressure value.

11. When the sampling system has refilled, tag the water level, if desired, for the current water table. If a port system is refilling very slowly, tag it at a later time.

See the spreadsheet provided with each *Water FLUTE* for the recommended purge and sampling pressures. Those are the pressures that can be used for a simultaneous purge of the several ports, but be sure that the buoyancy of the tubing will not lift the tubing, and the wellhead. The spreadsheet flags the condition where all ports should not be purged simultaneously. In most cases, several, to all, of the ports can be purged simultaneously.

Optimum sampling procedure:

Since it is often desirable to minimize the amount of time that the sample water resides in the pumping tubing, it is useful to note the actual time that is required for the recharge of the system. Since the fill rate slows dramatically for the last portion of the recharge, it is not necessary to wait for a complete refill. For most formations, the recharge is dominated by the tubing pressure drop. In that case, the time required for the purge stroke to be completed is about the same time required for the refill. (The exception is for a tight formation that recharges the tubing very slowly.) Hence the second purge can be started after waiting the same length of time as the first purge endured. If the second purge is of a similar volume (usually somewhat less) than the first purge volume, the refill time was long enough. After the same delay, the sampling stroke can be initiated. This timing of the strokes allows one to reduce the retention time in the pumping system. For very large sample volumes produced, the refill time can be shortened even more, as long as the sample volume is adequate after the discard of the first flow.

In some situations, the retention time is still too long. FLUTE can often increase the sample tube and port tube diameters for greater flow rates. However, the standard design is well matched for to a wide range of hole diameters, depths, and water table elevations. For very deep wells, the tubing may need to be of higher pressure capacity for the required driving pressures. For water table depths below 700 ft., this may be a concern. FLUTE initiated a design change from Nylon 11 to PVDF tubing in the Water FLUTE systems in 2002 to avoid any concern about tubing interaction with the sample water. However, the prescribed purge is sufficient for the use of Nylon tubing systems.

Questions: Call 888-333-2433 and ask for Carl Keller, or a field engineer.

Figure 1. Water FLUTE pump system

(Single port system shown for clarity)

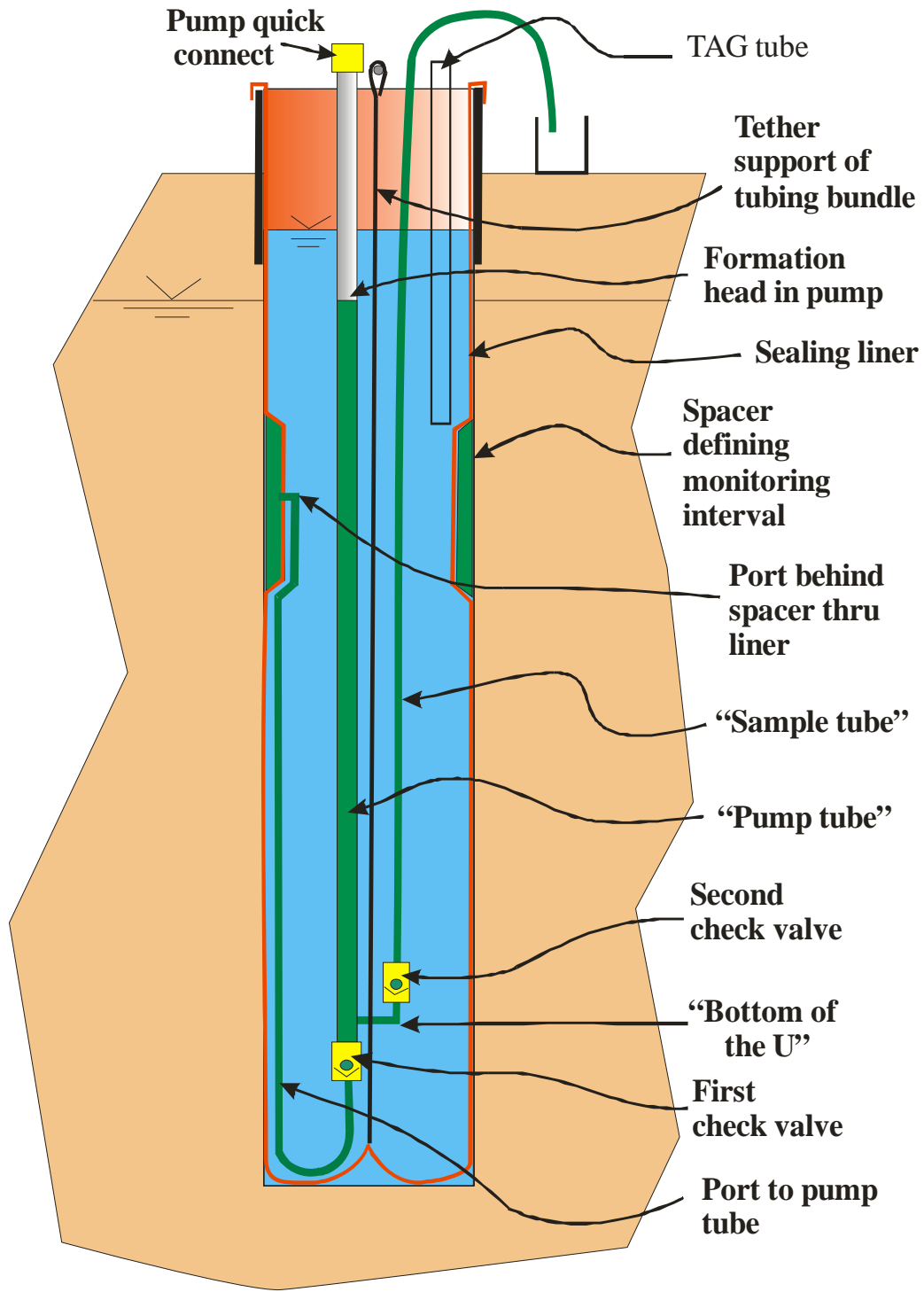


Fig. 2. Pumping Procedure

