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Groundwater Contamination Link Identified

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) - A new study suggests that nitrates may play a key role in increasing uranium contamination in groundwater.

The researchers from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln estimate that nearly 2 million people in California and the Great Plains live over groundwater that has been contaminated with uranium, which can cause health problems.

The study found that 78 percent of the groundwater samples that showed unsafe levels of uranium were from areas with high levels of nitrates, which typically come from nitrogen fertilizers and animal waste.

UNL Assistant Professor Karrie Weber says the nitrates moving through the soil convert uranium from a solid state to a liquid, allowing it to contaminate groundwater.

Weber says she hopes her findings will lead to more research on the link between nitrates and uranium contamination.

Associated Press