



Soil Horizons

PO Box 1063

Youngsville, North Carolina 27596

Memo

Guidance to help decide which type of septic inspection to request.

Most septic system inspectors do not conduct complete septic tank inspections because this would require major excavation and uncovering the top and all four sides of the tank(s). Even then, the bottom of the tank(s) still could not be observed. For this reason, most tank inspections are somewhat limited due to the excavation requirements and cost for a complete inspection.

Septic tanks are designed to stay full of wastewater except for the air space (freeboard) above the outlet pipe level. Conducting a tank inspection after the biosolids (sludge and scum) have been removed will give the inspector a better view of the inside walls and possibly the bottom of the tank. Unless the inspector observes the wastewater level in the septic tank before it is cleaned, they may not have evidence or know if the tank has a leak. Many times septic tanks have very slow leaks that do not show during normal occupancy and use but will manifest itself if the house is unoccupied for several weeks or months. If the septic tank is cleaned prior to an inspection, then the inspector will not know if it has a slow or rapid leak. Concurrent cleaning and inspecting the tank is the best way.

A potential buyer may not have the legal right to pay for and authorize the cleaning of a septic tank due to liability of tank damage and truck damage to paved driveways etc. This would need to be agreed upon by the buyer and the seller or owner of the house.

For these reasons, we offer a limited septic inspection *with* or *without* cleaning of the septic tank. Our report will indicate the biosolids level in the tank so you can determine if cleaning is prudent or necessary as regular maintenance. The standard rule of thumb is to clean the septic tank when the biosolids level exceeds 1/3 of the tank volume.