

The drinking water Taste-and-Odour wheel “2016”

I.H. (Mel) Suffet¹, Scott Braithwaite², Yubin Zhou³, and Auguste Bruchet⁴

¹ Department of Environmental Health Sciences and Environmental Science and Engineering, UCLA Schools of Public Health and Arts and Sciences, Los Angeles, CA 90095, USA

² Environmental Science and Engineering Program, UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustainability, School of Arts and Sciences, Los Angeles, CA 90095, USA

³ Department of Environmental Health Sciences, UCLA School of Public Health, Los Angeles, CA 90095, USA

⁴ CIRSEE, Suez, 38 rue du Président Wilson, 78230 Le Pecq France

Abstract

This paper presents the frame of reference of our knowledge of taste-and-odour problems in drinking water supplies by updating the “Taste-and-Odour Wheel” to 2016, an upgrade of the “Year 2000 and 2006 Taste-and-Odour Wheels. The wheel describes primary taste-and-odour categories, those common tastes and odours from each primary category that are defined by trained sensory panels and the chemicals that have been confirmed as odourants in drinking waters. Three different philosophies guide the usage of the “Taste-and-Odour Wheel.” First, the wheel has been successfully used to help develop a common language for taste-and-odour sensory panels and drinking water practitioners around the world. Second, the wheel has been devised to present the water industry with the current knowledge about the identification of the “common” organoleptic characteristics found in drinking water. Finally, the wheel has helped develop an understanding of the chemical causes of tastes and odours in drinking water supplies. This has helped the drinking water industry determine what chemical analysis to use to evaluate a taste-and-odour problem and thereby identify the chemical causes of the particular problem. More important, the control of taste-and-odour problems in water supplies has been developed based upon the chemical causes of the taste-and-odour problems. This paper for the first time has a “new” taste section. Also, the value of the taste-and-odour-wheel approach to help identify the odourants from chemical spills are illustrated for the first time.