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## Stubborn outdoor faucet needs an inspection

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Special to the Star

**Last fall, after my old-fashioned outdoor spigot quit working (no water flow, I assumed from a bad valve stem that had been going for a while), we replaced it with one of the “freeze-proof” models. We used it once or twice before cold weather set in, and it worked fine. But now all we get is a feeble trickle.**

**There is no inside shutoff, and there doesn't appear to be a leak. I'd heard there had been some problems with defective freeze-proof spigots. Is there an easy, inexpensive way to determine whether the spigot is defective or if there is a blockage in the line?**

This is one of those problems that needs an inspection. There are so many variables that any no-look opinion is just a guess. That being said, it's probably a problem with the faucet itself and only a coincidence it has happened to two different faucets.

As far as frost-free hydrants go, I have no problems with them. As long as the hydrant is installed correctly, and you remove the hose before the first freeze of the year, you should be fine.

You are probably going to be stuck replacing this faucet. Here are some tips for diagnosing the problem. If you have access in your basement below the hydrant, have someone turn it on while you are watching it from inside. Look for any signs of a leak. If you see water, you have a broken faucet and need a new one.

If you don't, you can shut the water off to your house and go outside to the hydrant and remove the stem. (This is usually something I suggest you leave to a pro. If you don't know what you are doing, it's pretty easy to break the hydrant or the pipe inside and cause yourself a large headache.)

If you have water with the stem removed you know the problem is likely in the hydrant. If you don't have water, call a professional. It could still be the faucet, or you might have a blockage elsewhere and need someone with more knowledge to track it down.

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