

## YOUR PET MAY BE AT RISK DURING HOT SUMMER DAYS FROM OTHER CAUSES ASIDE FROM BLUE-GREEN ALGAE

There has been much concern and many DNR inquiries after a story about 3 dogs dying after swimming in a North Carolina pond went viral recently. This story got national news coverage and it spurred a lot of local news coverage as well. There are some significant issues with the North Carolina story in that there's no mention of testing either the dogs or the pond water to confirm toxin presence and concentrations. By no means are we saying that blue-green algae was not the cause of their unfortunate death. We do want to educate people on other possible causes and what can be done to prevent them from happening with your pets.

Continue reading to learn how to recognize the risks of heat stroke and water intoxication in addition to blue-green algal toxins. The DNR has received inquiries regarding illness/death canine cases in which toxins are blamed for dogs' illness and death, yet water was reported as clear at the time of exposure, so heat stroke or water intoxication are a more likely cause. They have many of the same symptoms and outcomes if not treated properly.

Please view our resources page for links to read more from the DNR Facebook page about each of these issues:

[Water intoxication](#) from swallowing too much water while swimming and [heat stroke](#) share some symptoms with blue-green algae toxin poisoning. Give your dog frequent breaks from playing in water, supply flat objects for retrieval to minimize water ingestion, and provide access to shade and cool, clean drinking water.

Below are some typical questions the DNR has been receiving with their answers:

- **Is in in X Lake? Yes, blue-green algae are in every lake and river but the concern is mainly if it's present in high concentrations, known as a bloom.**
- **Is X Lake tested for blue-green algae? Local public health agencies would be the government units conducting toxin testing at public beaches, not the DNR, and most local PH don't have the capacity to do this.**
- **Can I test for toxins myself? This is a tricky one and I'm happy to answer their questions. The issues are that conditions will change in the several days it takes to get their results back, and local public health officers absolutely must be kept in the loop if homeowners intend to share results with their neighbors or tell them to stay out of the lake. We've had some difficult situations due to homeowners warning their neighbors about conditions that ended up being very low risk situations.**

If you see a bloom it isn't necessarily a permanent feature of your lake. Since blue-green algae float, they are moved around by wind and that may be why a bloom showed up at one area of a shoreline. If you view the entire lake, you most likely will see that other areas are clear.

Other forms of blue-green algae exist. Planktothrix and other benthic mat-forming blue-green algae floating to the surface in clumps are seen mainly in clear northern lakes.

Some blue-green algae normally grow in mats on the lake bottom in clear water. Later in the summer it is not uncommon for the mats to float to the lake's surface, especially in northern Wisconsin lakes. The good thing about these mats and clumps is that they are easily noticed because of their size and color and therefore can be avoided, unlike other blue-green algae that grow as microscopic planktonic particles dispersed throughout lake water. The same precautions that keep people safe from planktonic blue-green algae blooms also apply to these clumps of mat-forming blue-green algae.

Some blue-green algae can potentially make toxins that can make people and animals sick if they swallow them in lake water or inhale them in lake water droplets while skiing or tubing. Some people can be susceptible to skin irritation.

Dogs won't necessarily avoid the mats of blue-green algae, so it is important for pet owners to prevent their dogs from ingesting the mats via drinking the lake water, eating any material that may be washed up on shore, or licking it from their fur after swimming.

You cannot tell if accumulations of blue-green algae are producing toxins just by looking at them, so be wary of any high concentration of blue-green algae in water, whether it is dense accumulations of microscopic particles that discolor the water or areas with high concentrations of floating clumps of blue-green algae.

Even if water is clear, it's always a good idea to avoid swallowing any untreated surface water because it can contain blue-green algae, bacteria, viruses, or parasites that can make people and animals sick.

For additional questions or concerns, please contact your local DNR lake biologist or limnologist.

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