Animal Safety Alert

BLUE-GREEN ALGAE BLOOMS

When in doubt, it's best to keep out!

What is a blue-green algae bloom?

Cyanobacteria, sometimes called blue-green algae, are microscopic organisms found naturally in all types of water.

- Blue-green algae grow quickly, or bloom, when the water is warm, stagnant, and full of nutrients.
- Algae blooms usually occur during the summer and fall. However, they can occur anytime during the year.
- When a bloom occurs, scum might float on the water's surface.
- Blooms come in different colors, from green or blue to red or brown.
- As the bloom dies off, you may smell an odor like rotting plants.

What is a toxic bloom?

Sometimes, blue-green algae produce toxins.

- The toxins can be present in the algae or in the water.
- Swallowing water with algae that are producing toxins can cause serious illness.

Health and Safety Tips for Pets and Livestock

1. Do not let your pets or livestock graze near, drink, or swim in water where you see blue-green algae blooms, foam, or scum on the surface.
2. If your animal gets in water with a bloom, immediately wash it off with clean water. Do not let the animal lick algae off of its fur.
3. Call a veterinarian if your animal shows any of these symptoms of blue-green algae poisoning: loss of energy, loss of appetite, vomiting, stumbling and falling, foaming at the mouth, diarrhea, convulsions, excessive drooling, tremors and seizures, or any unexplained sickness that occurs within a day or so after being in contact with water.

You can help protect your pets and livestock from blue-green algae blooms by taking the following actions:

- Visit http://www.cdc.gov/hab to learn more about blue-green algae.
- Know what a bloom looks like and avoid contact.
- Keep pets and livestock away from the water if you see signs of blue-green algae.
- Call your veterinarian if your animals are sick.
- Call your state or local health department to report pets or livestock made sick by blue-green algae.

To report a blue-green algae bloom or a related health event:

- Call the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Environmental Health Harmful Algal Blooms program (HABISS) at: 866-556-0544.
- Call your local or state health department: _____

You cannot tell if a bloom is toxic just by looking at it!

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Environmental Health

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