

NEWS RELEASE

September 27, 2013

For Immediate Release

Media Contact Information:

Miranda Steele, Director of Communications
Kansas Department of Health and Environment
[785-296-5795](tel:785-296-5795) (office)
[785-260-3168](tel:785-260-3168) (mobile)
msteele@kdheks.gov

Ron Kaufman, Director of Information Services
Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism
[785-296-2281](tel:785-296-2281)
ron.kaufman@ksoutdoors.com

Waterfowl Hunters Cautioned about Blue-green Algae

Dogs can become ill if exposed to harmful algae blooms

TOPEKA, Kan. – The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) and the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWP) urge waterfowl hunters who use dogs to be vigilant for the presence of harmful blue-green algae. Dogs that swim in or drink water affected by a harmful algae bloom (HAB) or eat dried algae along the shore may become seriously ill or die.

Blue-green algae are really a type of bacteria called "cyanobacteria," which occurs naturally in all of our waters. Under the right conditions, the algae can rapidly increase (bloom) and produce toxins. HABs typically begin in May and can occur through October or later. They generally coincide with longer days and warm water temperatures and often flourish in nutrient-laden waters. However, dead algae can wash up on shorelines and in marshy areas and persist for long periods – posing a risk to dogs that eat or drink the algae or ingest it while licking their fur. A HAB may look like foam, scum or paint floating on the water and be colored blue, bright green, brown or red. Blooms can develop rapidly; if the water appears suspicious or there is decaying algae on the shore, avoid contact and keep dogs away.

Dogs are usually exposed to the toxins by drinking the HAB-affected water. However, they may still be exposed if they walk on, roll in or eat decaying algae along the shore or retrieve a bird with algae on its feathers.

The signs of illness in dogs usually occur within 30 minutes of exposure and include vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy, convulsions, difficulty breathing and general weakness.

If your dog has ingested algae, or has any of these signs after exposure, contact your veterinarian immediately as HAB poisoning can quickly lead to death.

People may also become ill after contact with a HAB. Symptoms vary depending upon the type of exposure (e.g. direct contact, ingestion, inhalation) but can include rash, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, sore throat, and headache. If you, or your dog, come into contact with algae rinse the area with clean, fresh water.

KDHE samples publicly-accessible bodies of water for cyanobacteria when the agency is alerted to a potential HAB. When a HAB is present, KDHE, in cooperation with KDWPT and other lake managers where appropriate, responds by informing the public of these conditions. KDHE does not sample private bodies of water such as farm ponds or livestock watering tanks.

Receive up-to-date lake conditions at this Toll Free Number: 1-855-HAB-LAKE (1-855-422-5253).

For information on blue-green algae and reporting potential harmful algal blooms or to report a possible animal exposure, go to: http://www.kdheks.gov/algae-illness/algae_advisories.htm.