

Harmful Algal Blooms and Animal Health



Harmful algae blooms consist of the fast growth of algae and cyanobacteria, or blue-green algae found in New Mexico lakes, streams, rivers, ponds and other surface waters when water is warm, slow-moving, and full of nutrients such as nitrogen or phosphorous. These waters can be impacted by fast-growing blooms that can look like foam, scum, mats or paint on the surface of the water that is green, blue, brown, or red in color. While these blooms are easily detected, others are not because they grow near the bottom of a body of water.



Blue-Green Algae and Pets, Livestock and Wildlife Health

Mammals are at risk of being poisoned by cyanotoxins by swimming, drinking water containing cyanotoxins or eating cyanobacteria, fish, or eating other animals having cyanotoxins in their system. The toxin can make animals very sick and can even kill them within hours or days of swallowing toxins.

Dogs are especially at risk of cyanotoxin toxins due to their behaviors around water. When they swim, drink, lick their fur, eat dead fish or other animals found near a bloom, they may become poisoned.

The following signs depend on how much mammals are exposed:

- Excess salivation and vomiting
- Fatigue and/or staggered walking
- Difficulty breathing
- Convulsions
- Liver failure
- Death within hours or days

Call the poison control center at 1-800-222-1222 with questions about cyanobacterial toxin poisoning.

Call the Animal Poison Control Center at 1-888-426-4435 or the Pet Poison Helpline at 1-855-764-7661

If your pets or livestock go near or into water with cyanobacterial bloom immediately wash them off with clean water to keep them from licking cyanobacterial off their fur.

Call a veterinarian if your animal shows signs of:

- Loss of energy and appetite
- Vomiting
- Stumbling and falling
- Foaming at the mouth
- Diarrhea
- Convulsions
- Excessive drooling
- Tremors and seizures
- Any unexpected sudden sickness

Helpful resources:



<https://www.niehs.nih.gov/health/topics/agents/algae-blooms>
<https://www.cdc.gov/habs/index.html>; <https://nmtracking.doh.nm.gov>

