Cyanobacterial Blooms and Animals

Cyanobacterial blooms can be deadly for pets and livestock.

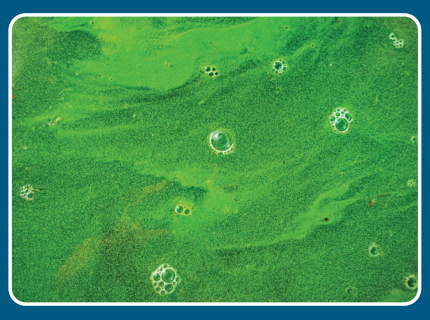
When in doubt, keep animals out!

Cyanobacteria (also called blue-green algae) are microscopic organisms that can be found naturally in all types of water (fresh; marine; or a combination, which is also called brackish). Sometimes cyanobacteria rapidly grow out of control, or bloom. Cyanobacterial blooms are most commonly found in fresh water, such as lakes, rivers, and streams. Cyanobacteria can produce toxins (poisons), which can cause serious illness in animals.

Signs of a cyanobacterial bloom

Foam, scum, mats, or paint-like streaks on the water's surface.

Different colors like green, blue, red, or brown.



As the bloom dies off, it may **smell like rotting plants**.

Cyanobacteria **bloom more often in summer and fall**, but can bloom anytime.

You cannot tell if a cyanobacterial bloom is toxic or not just by looking at it.

Protect your pets and livestock

- Keep pets and livestock away from the water if you see signs of cyanobacteria.
- Do not let your animals drink, swim in, or eat near discolored or scummy water.
- Keep animals from licking their fur, eating dead fish or other animals found near the bloom, or eating mats of cyanobacteria.

Pets and livestock can get very sick and die within hours to days after swallowing toxins made by cyanobacterial blooms.

If your pets or livestock are exposed to a bloom

- **Immediately wash them** with clean water so they don't lick cyanobacteria off their fur.
- **Call a veterinarian** if your animal shows any of these signs
  - » Loss of energy
  - » Loss of appetite
  - » Vomiting
  - » Stumbling and falling
  - » Foaming at the mouth
  - » Diarrhea
  - » Convulsions
  - » Excessive drooling
  - » Tremors and seizures
  - » Any unexplained sickness that occurs within a day or so after being in contact with water

Call **Poison Control** at **1-800-222-1222** if you have questions about cyanobacterial toxin poisoning.

Call the **ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center** at **1-888-426-4435** or the **Pet Poison Helpline** at **1-855-764-7661** if you have questions about your pet or livestock. (Note: There is a fee for these calls.)

Report cyanobacterial blooms or illnesses to your health department online or by phone.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Learn more about cyanobacterial blooms: **www.cdc.gov/habs**

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